

*The* DAUGHTER *of*  
DAVID KERR



HARRY KING TOOTLE

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**THE DAUGHTER OF DAVID KERR**



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Gloria Kerr.

# THE DAUGHTER OF DAVID KERR

BY  
HARRY KING TOOTLE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
M. LEONE BRACKER

*SECOND EDITION*



CHICAGO  
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TO  
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# THE DAUGHTER OF DAVID KERR

## CHAPTER I

**T**HE surprise which Gloria knew her unexpected arrival would occasion was even greater than she could imagine. Several things had happened in Belmont recently to disturb David Kerr, and he was in no frame of mind for further complications.

The stock-yards company was beginning to hint at certain favors it wished extended, and with an election coming on, Kerr was in no mood for such concessions. Worse still, the *Belmont News* had just changed ownership, and the new editor was not displaying that subservient fealty which had characterized all Belmont papers in the past. Already the *News* was snapping at his heels and asking questions which were extremely pointed. To

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have Gloria descend upon him at such a time was too much for even David Kerr. His mastery of the situation caused him to have no great fear for the stock-yard demands and the newspaper outcry, vexing problems though they were, but Gloria—Gloria in Belmont—was quite another proposition.

“Father, this is Gloria,” explained David Kerr’s daughter when she had established telephone connection with Locust Lawn.

“Gloria!” he exclaimed. “Where are you?”

“Here, in Belmont, at the station. I just came.”

“How did it happen? I was n’t looking for you.”

“Are n’t you glad to see me?”

“Glad to see you! Of course I am, but it’s a surprise. When did you come? How do you happen to be here? Why did n’t you let me know?”

“I wanted to surprise you,” she laughed. “Annabel Hitchcock’s aunt died, so we could n’t go to California. I had nothing else to do, so I came home. Was n’t that right?”

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“Exactly, exactly. But it’s a bad time to come to Belmont.”

“I don’t care, I’m so glad to be home. How do I get out to Locust Lawn?”

“You can’t well wait there for me to come in for you. Take a carriage and tell the driver you want to go to the end of the Townsend Park car line. Wait for me in the drug store. I’ll get there almost as soon as you do.”

“Hurry, Father, because I’m so anxious to see you. It’s been an age since I saw you, and you know I don’t know a thing about Belmont. I’m just dying to meet everybody, and then I’ll ask some of the girls out to visit me.”

“We’ll talk that over after awhile,” was his noncommittal response. “Wait for me at the drug store. Good-by.”

The carriage drive through Belmont and Townsend Park, a suburb, was of educational value. It gave her an increasing respect for Belmont. Although there was no remarkable residence district, there were occasional homes which denoted refinement as well as comfort-

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able circumstances. This was not in keeping with what David Kerr's daughter had been taught about her father's town. The number of automobiles also surprised her. By the time she reached the place appointed for her meeting with her father there was not so much of condescension in her attitude toward Belmont.

This changing viewpoint did not mean a diminution of enthusiasm. More than anything else it spurred her curiosity. She realized that the real Belmont was an advance over what she had been led to expect, just how much only a dip into the social whirl could reveal. The pleasurable part of it all was that Gloria was still queen by right of inheritance. If the kingdom was more extensive than she had thought, the court life would also be more brilliant.

Gloria had not long to wait for her father. An old-fashioned carriage covered with mud and drawn by fat bay horses drew up before the drug store. Out of the vehicle a somewhat ponderous individual pulled himself—a



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smooth-shaven man who appeared to be something over fifty, with heavy jaws and piercing eyes which looked clear through you from under beetling eyebrows. With a cry the girl flung herself upon him and smothered him with kisses.

“You old dear!” she exclaimed. “You have n’t changed a bit. I’m so glad to be at home with you. Isn’t it just dandy to be back in Belmont!”

The man smiled. Even if he had not changed, as she had sworn, he recognized that she had changed. In the two years since he had seen her, out of the chrysalis had come the butterfly; and this radiant girl was his daughter. For one brief instant he unlocked the neglected chamber of his heart which was the prison of the past, and thought of Gloria’s mother. Then the present with its obligations and its stern realities recalled him to the life that was from the days that once had been.

“Welcome home, daughter,” he said, making a peck in the general direction of her mouth do duty for an answering kiss. With

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David Kerr kissing had long ago become an obsolete custom. Then, too, no one had ever accused him of being unduly demonstrative. He had not built up his power in that way.

Seeing the negro driver bowing and scraping, Gloria left her father to speak to him. She might have forgotten Locust Lawn, but she had not forgotten Locust Lawn's chief factotum. Old Tom, who had been in Kerr's employ for a generation, had been her constant companion when she had outgrown the continuous vigilance of her nurse.

"How d' you do, Tom," she said, extending her hand. "I don't believe you remember me. Now do you?"

"Bless yo' heart, Miss Glory," grinned the old negro, "I 'd sho'ly know you anywhares. An' it does me a pow'ful sight o' good to see you. Why, chile, when you went away you wuz jes' a little gal. An' now look at you; you 's a reg'lar growed-up woman. Ah reckins you 'll want to git mahried soon. Hey?"

Gloria laughed; that same fresh, infectious laugh of hers which had warned many a wary

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suitor that he had not found the combination to her heart and had brought him to that plane of friendship on which he was always welcome. As well try to describe Patti's singing, in the days when her charm was greatest, as try to describe Gloria's laugh. There be those persons so presumptuous that on hearing it would aver she had never loved. Whether David Kerr was one of those his countenance did not betray. As he waited for her answer to the question put her by the old negro, a privileged servitor, his face was as impassive as ever it was on the night of an election.

"Why, Tom," she explained when she had ceased to laugh at the foolishness of the question, "I love everybody, of course, but nobody in the wide, wide world like that. I 'm never going to marry any one; do you think so?"

"Miss Glory, you neveh do know what de Lord 'll pervide. Look at me. Ah done say dat, too, when I wuz young lak you; but Ah 's had fo' wives already, an' mah time ain't come to die yit."

"All right, Tom. I don't know what the

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Lord will provide, but I'm not going out of my way to help Providence."

The words of this colloquy were neither more nor less than David Kerr had anticipated. It was from the spirit rather than from the wording of her reply that the father sought to ascertain the answer. It had been his one hope that somewhere on her travels she would meet a man worthy the love of a woman such as she, that she would marry him and never return to Belmont. Almost unconsciously, with that end vaguely in view, he had been diminishing his activities. He had money enough for Gloria's future, already she had her own income, and his age made even power irksome. He would move away from Belmont when Gloria married, and when she came to visit him it would be to some charming rural spot in the East she loved so well. Other men of his type had retired, why not he? One had even raised a horse which had won the greatest classic of the English turf. But for him, he had mused, there would be no such pursuits to bring him into the public eye. That he

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wished to avoid for Gloria's sake. And now all his plans seemed to be coming to naught—Gloria had come home, free of heart and anxious to mingle in Belmont society.

The drive to Locust Lawn was uneventful. Gloria watched for landmarks along the way, and commented on the changes twelve years had made. Locust Lawn seemed closer to town than in the old days. Most of her remarks about places they passed were addressed to Tom, because together, when she was a child, they had been over the road many times. David Kerr, never much of a conversationalist, was content to listen, hoping some chance speech might aid in clearing up the situation. Everything Gloria said, however, seemed only a confirmation of her determination to enter at once into Belmont's gayeties.

“Dar 's de first sight o' Locust Lawn, Miss Glory.”

They had just reached the top of a hill and Tom pointed with his whip to a house on the next eminence. Looking up, Gloria saw, not the estate of her imagination, but a square red

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brick house looking rather desolate through the bare branches of many trees. Locust Lawn at the end of winter was no enchanted fairy bower; but she was far too clever a girl, and far too good at heart, to betray any disappointment. To her the place was home, and she was anxious to recognize it as such.

The interior of the house was no more inviting. As soon as possible Gloria wandered from room to room, her inspection making her give silent thanks that she had not asked any of her friends to join her in her descent on Belmont. The wall paper with big yellow flowers, the carpets with big red flowers, the rocking chairs with the crocheted tidies, and the marble-topped table in the parlor with the inevitable plush album upon it, were no less distressing than the wax flowers under the glass case, the steel engraving of the Scotch Covenanters worshiping in a mountain glen, and the tin bathtub. She even gave thanks that she had not brought a maid.

“Mistah K.” said a negro mammy, putting her head in the door of the living room after

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Kerr and his daughter had finished going over the house, "Tom wants to know ef you is goin' to town dis mawnin'."

"No, Lily, I ain't going to town today. Tell Tom to send Yellow Sam with the spring wagon for Gloria's trunks."

"Dey's ben telephonin' you from town. Dey say it's pow'ful impo'tant business. Miss Glory, she done willin' to stay wif me, jes' lak she use' to. Ain't you, honey?"

To this Gloria gave laughing assent, but her father shook his head.

"I'm not going to town today. And tell the telephone operator not to connect any one with Locust Lawn all day. I ain't goin' to be disturbed. D' you understand?"

Aunt Lily, who probably was given that name by some ante-bellum joker because of her ebon hue, nodded her acknowledgment of the order and withdrew.

The reasons David Kerr had for not wishing to get into communication with any one in Belmont were several, but the most potent was his desire to be uninterrupted while engaged in

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studying his daughter and evolving some plan whereby she could be taken from Belmont before her slightest suspicion had been aroused.

One episode in their tour of the house had given him much comfort. Gloria had paused in the old-fashioned parlor and gazed long at his life-sized portrait, done in oils, over the marble mantel. Then she had looked about the room, and not finding what she sought, had asked,

“Where is one of my mother?”

“There is none,” he confessed, and added quickly, “but I’m going to have one painted for you. That was given me recently by the First Ward club.”

“What’s the First Ward club?”

“A political organization.”

“Politics! Do you know anything about politics?”

David Kerr almost smiled.

“I don’t know whether the President is a democrat or a republican,” she added. “What are you?”

“I’m a democrat.”



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“Then I’m a democrat, too,” she said loyally. “Politics makes my head ache.”

“Don’t bother about it.”

“Oh, I’m not going to. I don’t want to be a suffragette and march in a parade and be put in jail on bread and water. I don’t even read about it.”

Her absolute ignorance of politics, nothing remarkable in a girl of her years and training, was no small grain of comfort to her father.

It was not until after luncheon that Gloria disclosed the subject nearest her heart. Her father, like a wise general, permitted her to open the engagement. He had never been a man to exert more strength than was necessary for the discomfiture of the enemy. He wanted all her batteries unmasked, all her forces engaged, before he brought his own side into action.

For some time they sat in silence in the living room, gazing into the open wood fire. More than once Kerr thought his daughter was about to speak, but each time she seemed to think better of it or else lose her courage. He

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knew that something weighed on her mind, for she was much quieter than was her wont.

“I know I’m going to like Belmont very much,” she ventured at last. “And I want Belmont to like me. My coming home is different from that of other girls I know. At Annabel’s or Jane Leigh’s or any of the girls’ homes we have n’t been in the house ten minutes before the telephone begins to ring. In half an hour there are enough engagements to last a week. In Belmont I don’t know any one yet.”

This was not said in any tone of complaint. She could not dream of such a thing, because her father’s position was such that her lack of friends was only a temporary embarrassment. She knew that well enough. As for David Kerr, he made no comment, desirous of hearing her at greater length.

“If I had known that I was coming home I would have brought some of the girls with me.” She did not allow him to know that the house had not come up to her expectations. “I’m glad I did n’t because I don’t know any

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one here yet, and although we 'd all be received at once I could n't make it as pleasant for them as I can after I have had an intimate knowledge of things. After you once introduce me I think I can begin to plan for the girls. I'm under obligations to every single girl I know. I don't mean single—unmarried. But I might as well, because married girls don't go visiting around the country."

"I thought you entertained in the East."

"I did, but girls like to get to a new place. They're not looking for anybody, but the wider your territory the more certain it is that lightning will strike you."

"You've had a pretty wide territory," was her father's dry rejoinder.

"But I always ran for cover when I saw a storm coming."

"I thought you 'd come home engaged to a duke or a count at the least. Did n't you see any men you liked?"

"I liked them all, Father, but I have n't seen a foreigner I'd marry. They're nice enough to talk to and dance with and to bring an ice

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at a ball, but no more than that. But nothing worries me; I'm going to stay here and keep house for you."

"It ain't much of a house, Gloria. You see, I ain't ever had any women folk around here, and the place 'bout runs itself, 'cept what the niggers do. You won't like it, I'm afraid."

"I'll like it well enough. You don't know how I've envied other girls their homes."

"I tell you what you do. Go on to California now—I'll go with you, if you say so, and stay till you git settled with some of your friends. Then I'll come back and have the house fixed up so 's when you come again it'll be just what you want."

Kerr felt that if he could get her away he could see to it that she did not return, even at the cost of his leaving Belmont a year or two sooner than he had planned. To this suggestion Gloria did not accede. There was her curiosity about Belmont and her desire, something one who felt there was no depth to her nature could not understand, for a home.

"What! go away and miss all the fun of fix-

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ing up the house!" she exclaimed. "No sir, Daddy. I'm going to stay right here and make pies in the morning, have teas in the afternoons and go to the theaters at night. And you're going with me." Kerr made a deprecating gesture but she quickly overruled him. "Don't say a word. You're going, and tonight's the night we start. We're going to the theater tonight."

Then Gloria told of a girl she had seen on the train who had come to Belmont to a theater party. She explained to her father that no occasion would give her a better opportunity to see the Belmont of which she was to be a part than that offered that evening. In all likelihood she would meet a number of persons between the acts. From her point of view she suggested so many good reasons that her father was afraid to interpose any objection at the time.

The arrival of Gloria's trunks put an end to further conversation, as she went to superintend their unpacking. Long after she had gone, David Kerr sat gazing into the fire.

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Many a time he had sat in that room and planned each move of a political campaign from its inception to final victory and had seen those plans carried out to the letter. But here was a campaign, if he should undertake it, which would be different. He would not be fighting on his own ground where he was sure of himself; and into it would enter those unknown, unstable factors—women.

Kerr was proud of his daughter. He recognized that she deserved to associate with the first families. If she was to remain in Belmont he would see to it that she had a social position which would be above cavil. This much decided, there came the question of how it could be brought to pass. The fire had burned low in the grate before he had considered all sides of the question. When he rose from his chair and went to the telephone he had determined upon the only course which would have as its result the launching of Gloria as a *débutante* in Belmont's exclusive circles.

Great was the surprise in the box office of the

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Belmont Opera House when there came from David Kerr a request for a box. He telephoned to set it aside for him, that he did not know whether or not he would use it, but that he would send a check for the amount in the morning. The much flustered treasurer stammered that he would be most happy to put the box at Mr. Kerr's disposal and have him as a guest of the theater, but Mr. Kerr inquired the price of the box and closed the conversation by repeating that he would send a check for the amount in the morning.

And great was the surprise of the servants when at dinner the master of Locust Lawn appeared in evening clothes.

## CHAPTER II

**T**HE English surpass Americans in at least one respect; they have learned as a nation far better than has this newer country the possibilities of a dinner party. Perhaps it is their higher developed social system, more likely it is the general interest which is taken in governmental questions, which gives the dinner table an important, if unofficial, place in political life. A brilliant hostess, with heart and soul wrapped up in her husband's advancement, can do much to aid him as he toils up the ladder of political preferment by gathering at her board the leaders of her husband's party and also prominent men of the opposition. One need have only a superficial knowledge of American politics and American leaders to understand why this is not generally possible here. But there be some here, taking a leaf from England's book, who



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make the dinner party serve purposes not apparent to all the guests. Judge Amos Gilbert was one of these.

Fond, ambitious mothers held up to their sons as an example the rise of Amos Gilbert from an humble home in a frontier village to a position as the leading corporation lawyer of Belmont. He represented the electric light company, the street railway company, the water company, and the stock-yards company. A person with an analytical turn of mind, after studying a list of his clients, might remark that each and every one, individual, partnership, or corporation, could be favored by some political turn or damaged by some political machination. They found it better to employ Judge Gilbert than to trust to luck that all would go well.

All day Judge Gilbert had been trying to get in touch with David Kerr by telephone. Kendall, who represented the Chicago packers, had been called back to that city and was anxious to see Kerr before he left that night. Failing in this, Gilbert could make no definite

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promise as to Mr. Kerr's attitude on certain propositions set forth by the astute Chicago lawyer. On his own authority he did say, however, that the master of Locust Lawn was interested in watching the Belmont *News* develop its new policy under the new owner and editor who had managed to secure control of the sheet without Kerr's knowledge. That Kendall might see for himself and meet on friendly ground the new and disturbing factor in Belmont politics, Judge Gilbert invited Joe Wright, the new owner of the paper, to dinner. It was just by accident, apparently, that Mr. Kendall had been picked up at almost the last minute.

The only others present were Dr. and Mrs. Hayes. Sam Hayes, a rising young physician and surgeon, was coroner of Belmont County, an office which his society friends joked him about, but one which Hayes recognized and accepted as a political stepping stone. Then, too, it gave him opportunities to repay his political friends. David Kerr liked to have such young men hold office.

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Dinner over, Gilbert and Kendall withdrew to the library for a final conference over the stock-yards situation. Again they tried to telephone David Kerr, only to receive the information that he was not at home.

"You really think the Belmont *News* having been bought by this outsider," queried Kendall, "puts a different aspect on the present situation?"

"Judge for yourself," answered the Belmont attorney. "I had Mr. Wright to dinner tonight so that you could meet him without arousing his suspicions. I wanted to help you that much."

What Kendall really thought he evidenced by his indirect reply.

"I don't blame Dave Kerr for being angry because Wright slipped in and bought the paper."

For a minute or more the two men smoked in silence. Kendall was wondering what he could say to his Chicago principals which would make them understand that Belmont was not now the Belmont of the old days, that

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although to all appearances it was the same the practiced eye could detect the vague unrest which pervaded it.

Judge Gilbert had been too long in the harness to wince at a corporation request for the vacation of a principal thoroughfare and a public park, but he was tired of the long fight for grasping masters whose one demand was always for more, more, more. And yet he had no sympathy with such men as Joe Wright. He had made up his mind, however, that he would not aid the company in this new franchise grab. He was partly led to this conclusion, all unconsciously, because he knew David Kerr was not betraying any interest in it.

"The river eats up our tracks on the west," protested Kendall. "The stock-yards 'll never be safe while we depend on the one line." Then he added with emphasis, "We must come down Maple Avenue on the east and use Benton Park for switching yards."

"It can't be done."

"It can be done. Dave Kerr can do any-

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thing he pleases. He's the absolute boss of Belmont."

This was said with such a tone of finality that Judge Gilbert saw no need of replying. He knew that Kerr was the absolute boss of Belmont.

There flashed through the minds of both men the thought that the Belmont *News* might have something to say. It could n't prevent a franchise being passed, of course, but publicity at times was unpleasant. This was something Kerr did not court, Gilbert knew. He was the easy boss, letting every one have a share of the spoils, and thus all were satisfied. Few indeed had been the times when the town had attempted to revolt.

"You'd have the whole town up in arms," remonstrated Gilbert.

"They've been up in arms before. Once they brought ropes to hang the council, but Kerr put through the waterworks deal. You're the attorney for the street railway company; you know what he did there."

"Yes, yes, I know," Gilbert admitted has-

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tily. Then with a sigh of relief, "That's all past."

He ran his hand through his hair, gray long before the frost of age could come to silver it, and was thankful that such episodes were things of the past. He was weary of it all. Kendall's next remark, delivered with the chill incisiveness of a lawyer cross-examining a belligerent witness, brought him once more to the defense of the man who had made his success possible.

"Is Dave Kerr keeping out of the deal only through fear of young Wright and the Belmont *News*?"

"He is n't afraid of anything. Mr. Kerr merely says that it does n't interest him at the present time. As for me, I'm out of it."

"You're still Kerr's right hand adviser."

"Pardon me, his legal adviser."

Kendall did not pause to acknowledge the distinction, but went on, this time straight to the heart of the matter.

"I made what the stock-yards people con-

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sider a good offer. If that is n't enough, what 's his price?"

This point-blank question irritated Gilbert. He much preferred to call a spade an agricultural implement even when talking with those who stood close to him in his manipulations for the various corporations he represented. He therefore ignored the question, preferring to tell why the matter could not be taken up at present.

"The election 's coming on in a couple of months, and your franchise would be made an issue. We can't afford it with the *News* in a position to boost the republican party."

"I 've got to get it through as soon as possible. There 's nothing raw in this franchise, is there?"

"That 's the Chicago point of view," answered Kendall. "Stripped of legal verbiage, what you want is to lay railroad tracks, on which will run cattle trains, down a pretty residence street and use a park for terminals, all without giving property owners or the city

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adequate compensation for ruining or confiscating their property. I call that pretty raw."

"Well, it 's our best and certainly our cheapest way if Kerr will put through a franchise for us," Kendall maintained stubbornly. "I 'll come back next week, and take the matter up again. In the meantime you can talk it over thoroughly with Kerr. He may have something to say by that time."

"It hardly seems likely. He seldom changes his mind."

"He may this time. I 've got to get away now and go by the hotel before I go to the train. Let 's go back to the drawing-room, where I can have a few more words with Wright. We may be able to win him over."

"That 's what I 'm going to try to do," replied Judge Gilbert as they rose to rejoin Mrs. Gilbert and her guests.

The attorneys entered the drawing-room to find a discussion regarding newspapers just drawing to a close with victory still uncertain on which standard to perch.



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“You just missed hearing Dr. Hayes pay his respects to newspapers, Judge Gilbert,” said Joe Wright with a smile. The layman’s opinions always interest and usually amuse a journalist.

“What’s the matter? Have you told him you won’t publish the box scores of the ball games this year?”

“I’ll do that for him, and gladly.”

“Then there’s no occasion to kick. That’s the only thing that can trouble a fat man.”

“This time I was speaking generally,” explained Hayes. “I don’t like some of the ways reporters have.”

“That’s only a small part of the business,” laughed Wright. “If you complain only about that I shall have you for a staunch adherent.”

Mrs. Hayes saw that Kendall was at a loss to understand the drift of the conversation, and accordingly said, “Dr. Hayes is coroner, Mr. Kendall, and the *Banner* man calls us up at most unearthly hours.”

The Belmont *Banner* was the morning pa-

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per, and its editor, Deacon Jerry Withrow, was always at the beck and call of the boss. Kerr let him think that he had something to do with directing the affairs of the city. This was a harmless delusion, since his pliant attitude always made him consider a suggestion let fall by the boss as a scheme which he himself had hatched.

“I think it is dreadful for nice men to be mixed up in politics,” said Mrs. Gilbert.

Perhaps it was no more dreadful than was the lack of knowledge of politics displayed by the nice women of Belmont. This would have been difficult to impress upon Mrs. Gilbert. She knew well enough that her husband was consulted by that odious David Kerr, but that was in a legal way and Kerr paid well for the advice he received. Even the tone in which she spoke showed how thankful she was her husband was not in politics. Mrs. Hayes was quick to say what she thought along the same line by adding:

“And Dr. Hayes does n't have to at all,

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you know. He says he does it for the good of the party.”

The coroner looked at his pretty young wife and remarked in mock-disgust:

“What my wife does n’t know about politics would elect Bryan President.”

This would have been all very interesting to Kendall if he had had the entire evening to spend in such pleasant company. Time was pressing, however, and in the few minutes still at his disposal he wished to sound Wright at greater length about the Belmont *News*.

Kendall looked closely at the young man whom he had already set down as an opponent. Physically Wright seemed no shirker of a combat. His shoulders were broad and his body well developed. Led to believe from his knowledge of the reformer type that he would find Joe Wright a long-haired theorist and Utopian dreamer, the lawyer found instead a self-possessed, well-balanced young man. The newspaper owner’s manner, even in repose, was judicial. To Kendall’s think-

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ing he had the air of a man who would not be swayed by prejudice or liking. It was his part, however, as a special pleader, to make Wright think himself too much an idealist—if he could—in opposing the just claims of the stock-yard company.

“I suppose you found the *News* somewhat run down when you took hold of it,” Kendall remarked casually.

“Yes, the name was about all I bought.”

“I thought the paper had a pretty good mechanical plant,” interjected Gilbert.

Instinctively Wright felt the concerted action masked under the innocent question and the remark by Gilbert. Just what Kendall had to gain he did not know, but since he recognized him as a representative of large interests he thought best to let him know what stand the *News* might be expected to take. It was just as well that Gilbert should have it clearly in mind also. If the clients of these men were playing the game fair and square they would welcome his kind of newspaper. If they were n't, and Wright knew there had been

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lapses from grace on the parts of some of them, he hoped they would recognize in the paper the power which would first seek to prevent, and, failing in this, then try to correct. Judge Gilbert's allusion to the good mechanical plant he seized upon for a text.

"That's true, the *News* has a good mechanical plant." He paused to let that sink in before he continued. "Somehow or other when I think of a newspaper I never think of that side of it. I have in mind only the feeling of confidence with which a newspaper inspires its readers."

"What do you think the ideal newspaper is like?" asked Judge Gilbert. He wanted to know to what kind of star this young man had hitched his wagon.

"The ideal newspaper is one which has no axe to grind, and no personal animus in the discussion of private affairs or public questions, but only a constant regard for the truth and the lasting welfare of the state."

Kendall went to what he considered the heart of the matter.

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“Are n’t you leaving out of consideration, Mr. Wright, that everything—this government, even—is but a compromise?”

“No, I recognize that, and I believe in compromise. Without it we would still be cave dwellers. It is exactly because of this ever-present compromise that an honest newspaper is so valuable. It must see to it that this compromise is open and above board. It must n’t be the give-and-take trade of low politicians in the back room of a saloon or the far more dangerous trades of men higher up and powerful interests; not that kind of compromise, which after all is a sale of something one does not legally own to one who cannot or will not secure it honestly. I tell you that the majority must rule fairly and with a proper deference for the rights of the minority, that’s where a newspaper can be of service.”

Having decided to deliver a broadside, Wright had gone about it with great enthusiasm. The sight of Mrs. Hayes gazing wonderingly at him, for she did not understand what he meant, caused the editor to break off

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with a laugh. He recognized that Judge Gilbert's drawing-room was not the proper place for a lengthy exposition of his views.

"I'm afraid I'm preaching," he apologized, "and there's nothing I hate more than that."

"Not at all," protested Kendall. "Your views interest me greatly, Mr. Wright. When I come again I am going to see how far along you are on the road to the ideal."

With this Kendall announced that he must be going, and made his adieux. To have a few last words about Wright, Judge Gilbert accompanied the visiting attorney even to the front gate. His very last assertion was that he himself would have nothing to do with the proposed franchise grab and that he was morally certain David Kerr was of the same frame of mind.

### CHAPTER III

**A**S Judge Gilbert was about to enter his front door, having accompanied Mr. Kendall as far as the gate, he saw a carriage stop in front of the house. The man who got out and came up the walk he recognized instantly. None the less he did not walk like the David Kerr of yesterday; he seemed in every motion as he came into the light cast by the porch lamp to be the David Kerr of ten years hence. Realizing that only something unusual could bring the master of Locust Lawn out at night, and to his house, too, the lawyer went down the porch steps to meet his visitor.

“Good evening, Mr. Kerr,” was Gilbert’s greeting. “This is an unexpected pleasure.”

“Evening, Amos. Can I see you alone? I don’t want to be interrupted.”



## THE DAUGHTER

“We can go into the library. No one will disturb us there.”

To this Kerr made no reply. He toiled heavily up the steps and into the house. Gilbert's surprise increased on finding, when his visitor removed his overcoat, that he had on evening clothes. It was more an intuitive feeling than observation which made Gilbert understand how uncomfortable the boss found his unaccustomed raiment.

As Kerr walked through the hall and into the library, his own thoughts did not weigh so heavily upon him as to prevent him from satisfying his curiosity by gazing about him. It was the first time in his life that he had ever set foot in Gilbert's house. The invitation had been extended many times, but Kerr knew his social limitations and had always refused.

The judge pushed forward a big leather chair and into it Kerr dropped without a word. His hands rested listlessly on the arms of his chair, the bosom of his shirt was rumped and bulged out of his waistcoat, his breath came heavy and fast, and he gazed dully at the fire

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in the grate. Gilbert had never seen him in such a condition before. Until now he had always been the man of iron, accepting his many triumphs and his few minor defeats in the same imperturbable manner.

"I tried to get you by telephone several times today," Gilbert began.

"I know it, but I was n't in the mood for nothin'." The very tone in which he spoke betrayed that fact.

"I promised Kendall I'd call you up in regard to the new franchise he's anxious for you to support."

"That'll keep."

"I told him that personally I could not be interested."

This drew no answer from the boss. Gilbert made no further attempt at making conversation and for a time the two men sat in silence. When Kerr launched his first question it seemed apropos of nothing.

"How long you been in Belmont, Amos?"

Gilbert's brain went through a series of rapid thought transitions in an effort to divine

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whither the question led. He was accustomed to Kerr's interrogatory methods, but everything was so out of the ordinary this evening that he tried his best to fathom the boss's purpose, before, in his usual indirect fashion, he disclosed the object of his visit. The question was one easily answered, albeit with some surprise.

"Why, a little more than twenty years."

Kerr continued to gaze into the fire, seemingly oblivious to his surroundings. Gilbert could not have sworn that the boss had heard him reply. Then came another question, still seemingly apropos of nothing.

"Remember your first office—after you quit keeping it in the top of your hat?"

"Yes, very well. I paid you two dollars a week for desk room in a corner of your real estate office—in that same old office you still have on Fifth Street."

"That's what I charged you—but I don't guess you've got a receipt for every week. Was it you or Bill Stoner in them days used to use my big atlas for a ironin' board?"

## THE DAUGHTER

“Both of us, I believe.”

Kerr moved restlessly in his chair, then went on.

“Many’s the time I’ve opened that book to show a man the plat of an addition and out would drop your other handkerchief. I guess the mirror in your room was n’t big enough to hold a handkerchief on your wash day.” He looked about the library, absorbing its quiet elegance. “Things mighty different now, ain’t they?”

“Then I was struggling to get a start.”

It seemed to be a monologue Kerr was delivering. His questions were answered, but he made no sign that he heard. His remarks were delivered at random and he never took his gaze from the fire, except the one time he had looked about the room to note the contrast of the present with the time when Gilbert had first come to Belmont.

“’Bout that time you wanted to git married to a mighty nice girl.”

“Yes, that was about the time I was elected prosecuting attorney.”

## OF DAVID KERR

“Exactly,” then after a pause, “and you got married.”

Gilbert could not understand the drift of the conversation, but he recognized that Kerr was reviewing the past step by step.

“Then I gave up my desk in your office, and moved to the courthouse.”

“But you still came to see me, Amos.”

This was said as quietly as had been his previous remarks. Taken by itself it was a harmless utterance, but in connection with what had gone before it was of great significance. Yes, Amos Gilbert, the rising young prosecuting attorney, *had* gone to see David Kerr after he had moved his office to the courthouse. The boss let that remark sink in well before he asked,

“After that how long was you on the bench?”

“Six years.”

“Is that so! I had n’t an idee it was that long. What made you give that up?”

“I had a family on my hands and needed more money. I did n’t run again, you remem-

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ber, because I wanted to be attorney for the new street railway company."

Kerr seemed to be revolving something in his mind, for it was some time before he reminded Gilbert of a step in his rise which he had not mentioned.

"I thought you was lawyer for one of them crowds that was fightin' for a franchise."

"Well, we got the franchise."

That was what Kerr wanted to bring out.

"Exactly. And you 're still their lawyer."

"Yes."

"And for the water company," mused Kerr.

"And for the 'lectric light company. And you still come to see me, Amos."

"Why, yes, Mr. Kerr, I 'm not unmindful of—"

Kerr seemed to throw off some of the gloom in which he had appeared to be wrapped as he interrupted the attorney.

"This time, Amos, I 've come to see you. It 's the first time I 've ever been in this house."

"Well—Mr. Kerr—I—," stammered Gilbert.

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The boss pulled himself together in his chair, sat up straight and looked at Gilbert.

“But you’ve got a telephone.” Then he added in a gentler tone: “That’s all right, Amos, I’ve always understood.” It seemed to be with an effort that he continued, “I’m going to tell you some things that you know, and some things that you don’t know, and some you’ve guessed, and some I’ve thought nobody’d ever have to know. ’Bout the time you come here I was married, and my wife died on giving birth to a girl.”

“Gloria.”

“Yes, Gloria. I was just gittin’ into politics. Things might’ve been different if my wife had lived. It didn’t seem long before there I was with a big girl on my hands—me, David Kerr.” The old feeling of power surged through him as he added with spirit, “If it had been a boy!”

This thought held him silent for a minute, and when he took up the thread of his story again it was the old weary tone.

“Well, it was n’t. There I was with a girl

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on my hands. Her mother did n't have any relatives. Her father was a minister, same's my father was. I did n't have anybody, either, I could send her to. I kept her as long as I could, but by that time my house—even in the country—war n't a fit place for a child—specially a girl. So I sent her away to school and she ain't been back since. I reckon Belmont's forgot about her. I gave her plenty of money, but she never knew anything of my—transactions. She thinks I made it all in real estate."

"Then she does n't know—"

"That's the hell of it—she don't."

Kerr could sit still no longer. He pulled himself out of his chair and stood with his back to the fire and directly facing Gilbert. "All these years I've acted a lie. I've made Gloria believe I'm the leading man in Belmont. I am—but not in the way she thinks. It was n't because I loved her; I can't say I do, 'cause I don't know her well. I ain't been East to see her for a couple of years. It was pride made me tell her that; that's what it was,



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pride. I wanted my girl to have what I'd missed. I didn't want her to know."

He lapsed into silence, which he finally broke himself with the explanatory remark:

"Gloria thinks I'm the social leader of Belmont; that the whole town hangs breathless on what I say shall be the fashion at pink teas."

"Hasn't she often wanted to come back?"

Kerr was not to be hurried. He began to pace up and down in front of the fireplace. When he paused, the lawyer, to secure a continuation of the story, said:

"Well?"

"This morning she came home."

Now Judge Gilbert understood; yet he could scarcely believe it possible.

"What! Gloria here!"

"Yes, here," echoed Kerr. "Come home, that's what she calls it. She's been visiting school friends since she came back from Japan, and had just started to California when the party fell through when they'd got to St. Louis. So she jumped on the train and came to Belmont unannounced—to surprise me."

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So here was Gloria in Belmont. It was more than embarrassing. Gilbert recognized that it was tragic. Kerr never mentioned his daughter, and Belmont had almost forgotten her existence. Much that the boss had told the lawyer was news to him. Gloria Kerr, the little girl, had been allowed to slip out of his mind and he had come to regard the political leader, just as every one else did, as a thing apart, as a power almost as impersonal as the force of gravity or the freezing of water. The easy boss was regarded as just as much a Belmont fixture as was the river which flowed past the town, and those good people who laid aside the rose-colored spectacles of Belmont's *laissez faire* doctrine felt that it would be just as easy to remove one as the other.

The lawyer in Gilbert now rose to the surface and he began to question Kerr just as he would a client. The girl was here. The only thing now to discuss was what to do with her.

"She can't help but learn the truth!" Gilbert exclaimed at last.

He sank back in his chair, overcome by the

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weight of the problem. On the wall, where he could see it, hung the picture of his own daughter, Julia, now away at school, and the bitterness of the whole thing was brought home to him all the more poignantly because he, too, was a father.

The hopelessness of Gilbert's tone when he declared Gloria would learn the truth if she remained roused Kerr to his old self. When he had entered the room he seemed crushed beyond recovery. Now he suddenly developed all the spirit, all the calm resourcefulness, which he had ever displayed when listening to the report of some political revolt which would call forth hitherto latent strength.

"She must not know," he replied with all his old dominance. "Listen to me, Amos Gilbert,—that girl must be recognized. I know what people say of me, and I've abided by the verdict. I ain't been no hypocrite. I've played a man's game, and I've dealt with men. I ain't asked nothin' of your women folk, but now I do. I'm bringing Belmont a girl any of you could be proud of. She's got to be

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took up by the right people—I've kept her away all these years, she don't know my story, and I don't intend she shall. She's the equal of any girl in Belmont and, by God, she'll have an equal chance."

"What can I do?" asked Gilbert.

It was for this Kerr had waited. It was for this moment that he had called the past to mind. He had wanted Gilbert to have before him the many obligations under which he rested. It is true that he could have commanded, but he was too much the easy boss to issue orders where he could hold forth a glittering reward as the price of valuable services. To the ward heeler the word of the boss is a fetish to be blindly worshiped. To his few leading lieutenants the command is coated with sugar which has a negotiable value. Gilbert having asked what he could do brought Kerr at once to the arrangement he had planned whereby the lawyer would profit through the introduction of Miss Kerr to society.

"I've made bargains all my life, Amos,—to-night I make one with you. Prosecuting

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attorney, judge, corporation counsel, with all the money you 've made—”

At this Gilbert made a disparaging gesture which caused Kerr to add, “in fees—with all the money you 've made, you still fall short of the riches that 'll purchase real freedom. I know how you stand, and things are pretty much in the balance.

“Think what it means to your daughter, money.” As he spoke he pointed to the girl's picture. “It 's leisure, travel, friends abroad, an assured future. I can give them to you, I, David Kerr; and I will—on one condition. Gloria Kerr must have the place she thinks is hers in Belmont.”

He paused to let the lawyer grasp the importance and the value of such an undertaking, and then disclosed the means by which the fortune was to be secured. If a man should ever pay another out of his own pocket for such a service he would be a philanthropist and not a political leader; Kerr was certainly not the former, and his life training had never caused him to separate a dollar from his own bank

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account when he could extract it without pain—to him—from some one else.

“For this one thing,” he explained, “I give freely into your hands any franchise you may draw for the stock-yards belt line railway. Disguise it as a street railway line to run down Maple Avenue. Make what bargain you like, five hundred thousand, a million dollars, it’s worth it. And always remember, I’m back of you.”

The possibilities of the scheme overwhelmed Gilbert. What he was to do for Kerr, even the fight for the franchise, did not enter his mind. He was busy thinking of the freedom he could purchase in so short a time. All that he had ever dreamed of could be brought to pass. Kerr, who knew almost to a dollar the financial standing of every man in Belmont, was well aware that Gilbert had been hard hit in several stock exchange transactions, so badly in the last one that he had called upon the boss for assistance. Yet he had just told Kendall that he would have nothing more to do with that kind of work. He had begun to develop

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a conscience—for Julia's sake, perhaps, for his daughter's future—and here came Kerr who wanted him to go down once more into the maelstrom of shady politics for the sake of his daughter.

His gratitude for what Kerr had done for him was great enough to cause him to do anything for Kerr's daughter he could, but since the boss had put it up to him and he had back of him all the boss's power, he began to wonder why he should not accept the opportunity to make a fortune quickly. It had been held out to him as meaning leisure, travel, friends, and a roseate future for his Julia. He longed for those things for himself, no less, and here was the chance of his lifetime. He would know how to make those Chicago schemers pay well for the legal advice he would give them.

"It won't be easy," said Gilbert finally.

Kerr had won his first victory. The lawyer had surrendered.

"That's why I came to you," was the boss's answer, a reply charged with subtle flattery. Gilbert really did represent in his autocracy

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the best element; a smug set, perhaps, but still the best. To other lieutenants were delegated hammer and tong jobs; Gilbert was the instrument when finesse was required.

“There ’s a certain element, Mr. Kerr, it will be hard to win over—that wholesale clique. You have no direct dealing with the men, and—well—that is—you see, they don’t know you and they might not be interested in Gloria. They ’re a clannish lot.”

“I ’ve fought many a fight, Amos, but never one like this. If it develops into a real fight, I still hold the whip hand.” He raised his right arm menacingly, his hand clenched to a pugnacious fist. “Let any silly girl sneer at my daughter, let any ninny of a boy be uncomplimentary, and I no sooner hear of it than I ’ll put the screws on—and then God help ’em. They don’t know me! Well, they may yet.”

“When can Mrs. Gilbert meet Gloria?”

“I brought her with me—she ’s in the carriage.”

“She came with you!”



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"Yes, I told her we was going to the theater. Then we stopped here on important business."

"Bring her in. I'll call Mrs. Gilbert."

While Kerr went for his daughter, the lawyer called his wife into the library, and explained the situation to her as best he could in so brief a time. He only told of Gloria's belief in her father's social importance, nothing of how he had promised to introduce her. Of course his wife would never know his wages for acting as Gloria's sponsor.

"What a remarkable thing to do!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert when she finally realized Gloria's position.

"I think Kerr was crazy, Julia, ever to start it, but here she is in our house and we must help carry out the deception."

"But Dr. and Mrs. Hayes?"

"Who made Hayes coroner?"

"But Mr. Wright? Will he meet David Kerr?"

"Mr. Wright's our guest and he's a gentleman, dear."

Here was something Gilbert had not

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thought of. Perhaps fate was playing into his hands. He hoped so anyway. David Kerr would meet on neutral ground the man who had already caused him some uneasiness. Since the boss never called on any one, and since Wright surely would not go to see him, this was, when all was said and done, to be an important meeting.

## CHAPTER IV

**G**LORIA could not understand why she was not of most importance, and was not a little piqued at the long wait in the cold while her father was with Judge Gilbert. Her only consolation for being late to the theater was that every one would be there to see her arrive. She knew that when she entered the box every one would turn to look at her. A harmless little thought certainly for so pretty a girl as she. She tried to beguile the time by questioning Tom, but the driver had suddenly lost his tongue, due to Kerr's order issued privately, and talked only indifferently on indifferent topics. He was grossly ignorant concerning matters which to Miss Kerr seemed of vital importance.

At last came her father with the announcement that she was to come in to meet Judge and Mrs. Gilbert. The girl was torn with con-

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flicting emotions, being anxious to get to the theater and at the same time desirous of seeing how many years ahead of Locust Lawn was this house which she had been invited to enter. There was no reason why she could not do both, since meeting Judge and Mrs. Gilbert could mean only a few minutes' more delay. They could then hurry to the theater, and if she was pleased with these new acquaintances she would urge them to join her. Loyal though she was, she would welcome any one who would be a diversion. Gloria was quick to notice a *faux pas*, and certain of her father's slips of grammar and lapses from punctilious etiquette had made her wish some companionship less blunt.

At the door she was met by Judge Gilbert, who welcomed her to Belmont with great cordiality. Here was a man who understood the niceties of life. Gloria's heart went out to him almost as much for the manner of his welcome as for its genuine warmth. As David Kerr had done when he had entered the house, the daughter gazed about her as she passed

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through the hall, and all that she saw was given the stamp of her approval. It was just another step in her growing appreciation of Belmont as it really was. She noted also the familiar terms on which Judge Gilbert and her father were. She had never doubted her father, yet this was a pleasing affirmative note in her theory of Belmont life which had not been without its contradictions that day.

“I wonder if you remember Mrs. Gilbert?” said the judge as he ushered Gloria into the library. At her entrance, Mrs. Gilbert, a really gracious woman, came forward to greet her.

“How do you do, Miss Gloria?” she said, “it’s a pleasure to find that you’ve come back to Belmont.”

“I’m charmed to meet you, Mrs. Gilbert. Indeed it is nice to be at home once more and I’m so glad to have you say so.”

The next bit of conversation puzzled Gloria not a little. She remarked it at the time, and even thought of it once after she had returned to Locust Lawn that night.

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Judge Gilbert said quietly to his wife, "Mr. Kerr, dear."

At this Mrs. Gilbert turned, bowed slightly and merely said, "Good evening, Mr. Kerr."

"How d'ye do, ma'am," replied Gloria's father, to his daughter's surprise and also somewhat to her disgust. Mrs. Gilbert's greeting had been extremely brief, but her father's had been extremely provincial. Not only was it a slipshod manner of speaking, but it had been accompanied by a bow which Gloria thought uncouth. Her father had written once or twice about Mrs. Gilbert, and Gloria, after the manner of society, was fain to enlarge upon the number.

"It's been my one wish to meet you, Mrs. Gilbert," said the girl. "I went away when I was so young that I can't honestly say that I remember you, but in his letters father spoke so often of you and of visiting here. Did n't you, Father?"

Thus appealed to, Kerr was forced to reply.

"Yes—Oh, yes, Gloria, but never mind that now."

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Judge Gilbert was quick to come to the rescue, and forestalled further embarrassing remarks by saying:

“I suppose it will be a novelty for you, Miss Gloria—living in the country.”

Gloria laughed, and her answer contained due notice of what she intended to have in the immediate future.

“Father has n’t a motor car—yet, and I don’t know how I ’ll like it.”

“You ’ll get used to it,” was Mrs. Gilbert’s comment. “Locust Lawn is lovely in summer.”

“But it is n’t summer yet. And it makes it inconvenient when one wants to go out in the evening. I’ve often wondered why father did n’t have a town house. He goes out so much and must be in Belmont so late at night that to my mind a town house would be a necessity. But there he sticks in the country like an old poke.”

Her idea of her father’s duty to himself was so strong that she turned to him to tell him just what she thought of him. During her

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speech Kerr had been exceedingly uncomfortable, but there was no way to stop her.

"That 's just what you are, Father," Gloria asserted stoutly, "for sticking in the country when you go so much in society—an old poke."

Again Judge Gilbert came to the rescue. "You forget he does n't go out as much as when he was younger."

"Exactly. I don't git out like I did when I was younger," Kerr repeated.

"I think every one will have to like me very much," Gloria complained with a whimsical air of doubt, "to come 'way out to Locust Lawn to see me." She knew well that they would come, but a town apartment, something modern, loomed large in her mind. These remarks were only the pioneer work preliminary to a siege.

"I 'm afraid Belmont will seem mean compared to the places you have lived," suggested Mrs. Gilbert. In the short time she had been with Gloria she had seen enough to make her certain that there were breakers ahead.



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"Not at all," answered the girl. Judge Gilbert was talking earnestly with her father, and this gave her a chance to confess privately to Mrs. Gilbert.

"It seems good to me because it is home, and I can do as I please without comment. I mean to live my life to the full, just as do other girls whom I visit. Except when I've been with them, it's been chaperon and school, school and chaperon for so long that I'm honestly glad to get into a house where no one rushes in every few minutes to see if I'm reading a French novel or writing love letters to the chauffeur."

Mrs. Gilbert laughed heartily at the martyrdom Gloria had suffered, and promised that such would not be her lot in Belmont. When Mr. Kerr joined them she went to summon her other guests.

"Judge Gilbert has been telling me, Gloria," Kerr began, "that things was quiet here just at this season. Now California—"

"Telling you!" repeated Gloria. Why did her father need to have any one tell him any-

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thing about Belmont? Then was n't she excuse enough for all the gayety possible?

"Ain't got nothin' against California, have you?" Kerr asked, ignoring her exclamation.

"I don't know." She turned away from him, conscience-stricken at her tone of indecision. "I wanted to come home, yet—"

"Don't you like Locust Lawn, girl?"

"Yes, yes," she answered quickly. "But—everything is so different from what I imagined it would be. Give me a little time to think about the California trip."

At that moment Mrs. Gilbert returned with the guests who for some little time had been entertaining themselves in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Hayes and her husband were first introduced to Gloria. While they exchanged a few pleasantries, Wright, in charge of Judge Gilbert, was meeting David Kerr. It was not until Mrs. Gilbert called him to her to present him to Miss Kerr that the editor of the Belmont *News* and the daughter of David Kerr came face to face.

To the surprise of the others present Gloria

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gave a little scream of delight and came forward with both hands outstretched to greet the young man. He no less gave evidence of his pleasure at the meeting. His face lighted up with a smile and the way he grasped both her hands betokened his happiness at seeing her again. If the others could not share their gratification, they could at least share their surprise.

“Joe Wright, of all persons!” exclaimed Gloria, shaking his hands heartily, her face radiant with smiles.

“Miss Kerr! You here!” It was all he could say, but he put into it a wealth of feeling which made it impossible to mistake his meaning. He forgot David Kerr, he forgot every one but this girl whom now he met again after so long a time.

“You’re the last person I’d expect to find in Belmont.”

“But you’re not the last person I’d hope to find here,” he replied.

Whereupon they both laughed and shook hands again.

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Mrs. Gilbert was the first of the others to recover the power of speech. "You know each other!"

"Indeed we do," replied Gloria. "We traveled abroad for a time in the same party. How do you happen to be here?" she asked Wright. "Tell me all about it."

"There isn't much to tell. I live here now."

"How funny!"

"I'm not apologizing for it," he laughed.

"I don't mean it that way. Belmont is my home, too. I was born here."

"Here! In Belmont!" He made no effort to conceal his surprise.

"Yes," she said proudly; "I am the daughter of David Kerr."

Had she struck him a blow full in the face she could not more have staggered him. In the joy of meeting her, Wright had forgotten everything but the pleasure of seeing her again and the memories her presence conjured up of what he called their mad old, glad old Paris days when they had been so much to-

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gether. He had forgotten the sordid present with the fight to make friends for his kind of newspaper, the effort to meet the payroll, and the continuous struggle against what he knew to be the evil influences of David Kerr. David Kerr, her father! With Gloria's explanation, raised by her pride in her father almost to a boast, all this was brought back to him. He still smiled, but his heart went dead within him. The sun which had shone for him so gloriously only a minute ago was now hidden behind the blackest cloud in the heavens.

Selfish as they wished to be, for a time they were forced to join in the general conversation and satisfy the curiosity of the others concerning their previous acquaintanceship.

"When did you and Gloria meet?" Kerr asked the newspaper man.

"First on a steamer going to Europe."

"And then accidentally any number of times on the continent," added Gloria.

"There's no need now of your fearing you will be lonesome, Miss Gloria," was Mrs. Gil-

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bert's comment. "How lucky to find an old friend."

"Yes, indeed," replied Gloria, with such spirit that no one could believe she was merely saying the polite thing. "I command you to come to see me at once, Mr. Wright. I know hardly a soul in Belmont. You see I just came home this morning."

Thus within a quarter of an hour after meeting the boss of Belmont, Wright found himself invited to his home. The circumstances that had brought about the invitation he would have considered out of the range of all reason half an hour before. He knew the game too well not to understand how the easy boss works and all unconsciously Gloria was seeking to further her father's plans.

Through friendship, loyalty and a sense of obligation which one is not permitted to forget, the political leader obtains active co-operation where to deny him would appear base ingratitude. To keep from being placed in such a position was Wright's one aim. Consequently, to Gloria's invitation he merely

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murmured a polite assent, inwardly resolving to find sufficient excuses to make it impossible for him to be a visitor at Locust Lawn. Yet something within him at the same time was telling him that he must see Gloria often.

As they were now leaving, Dr. and Mrs. Hayes came to say good night to Gloria. Gilbert and Kerr found this the favorable moment to slip out of the library unobserved.

"I've told Mrs. Gilbert how sorry we are we have to be going, because I so wanted to have a little chat with you," began Mrs. Hayes. "I'll give you only a day or two to unpack before I come to call."

"Please don't wait for that to happen," urged Gloria. "I've lived in trunks so long that I'd feel like a motor without gasoline if I should take all my things out and hang them on hooks like civilized people do."

"I wonder if you could be interested in some settlement work I'm doing," continued Mrs. Hayes.

"Don't let her rope you into that, Miss Kerr," protested the doctor.

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"Is n't it fashionable?" inquired Gloria cautiously.

"Not fashionable and highly insanitary," was his verdict. "A germ is no respecter of persons. My wife's liable to bring home anything from measles to socialism."

"But think of the poor, unfortunate, ignorant people," pleaded Mrs. Gilbert, who with Mrs. Hayes was interested in a mission established in a poor quarter of the town by the Presbyterian church.

"That's what I tell him," said Mrs. Hayes.

"It is n't our fault, is it?" asked Gloria. To her, settlement work was a sealed book. Slat-ternly women with troops of dirty, sniveling brats repelled her. Were she ever to develop any philanthropy along these lines, she was sure that the work would be carried on vicariously.

"Of course it is n't our fault," added Dr. Hayes emphatically. "I still say, Rose," turning to his wife, "that I have no sympathy for people who use the bath tub for a coal bin."



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"I 'll tell you about it some other time," said Mrs. Hayes to Gloria, not despairing of making her a worker.

"I 'm afraid you 'll find me hard to convert."

"Then I 'll appeal to Mr. Wright to help me."

"I have no influence with her," laughed Wright.

"Not since you ran way from us in Paris," pouted Gloria.

Dr. Hayes and his wife left the library conveyed by Mrs. Gilbert.

For the first time that evening Gloria and Wright found no one to interrupt their conversation.

He was standing in front of the grate, his admiration for the girl shining honestly forth from his eyes as he watched her say the last good-byes. When the others had gone, she turned to Wright with a smile. Walking across the room to him she held out her hand, and said simply:

"You don't know how glad I am to find you here."

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“Are you?” he replied, retaining her hand while he spoke. “Since that’s the case I would n’t care to be anywhere else in the world.”

Then they sat down to talk of other days.

## CHAPTER V

**T**HERE was so much to be said that Wright and the girl were at a loss to know where to begin now that they had an opportunity to talk without interruption. With Gloria there was an undercurrent of unrest caused by the fact that she feared he had carelessly broken the promise made on the Rhine to meet her again in Paris. She had waited and he had not come.

Wright was no less interested in what they were about to say. In the first place, after a long absence, he was again with the girl whom he had made it a point to meet at various places in Europe. To add confusion to their friendship, which he had highly prized, had just come the astounding revelation that she was David Kerr's daughter. How could he be a friend of the daughter and an enemy of the father? Then, too, what did she know of

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her father's methods, and of his own attitude toward the boss of Belmont? And if she knew, what did she think? These things made conversation rather an exhausting mental exercise.

"Well?" Gloria smiled, inviting him to begin the story of all that had happened since they had shaken hands and parted, he to go to London and she back to Paris where she was to see him later but where disappointment awaited her.

"Well," he answered. He wanted her to begin, and thus give him the cue to her line of thought.

"This is n't much like Paris."

"You 're here."

"Yes," she laughed, "and you 're here, too. That 's why it is n't like Paris when I saw it last."

"At any rate, I 'm glad we 're both here." He was anxious to have her interpret the present.

"For me it is the first time in twelve years."

This came as a glad surprise to Wright.

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Then she cannot know much, he thought. Her remark emboldened him to say:

“Did n’t you tell me your father was a real estate operator?”

“Yes. Did n’t you know that?”

“I had almost forgotten. You see, I am practically a stranger here. You and I are alike in that respect, if you have not been here for a dozen years.”

“Oh, I would n’t say that,” she replied quickly. “My father knows everybody and everybody knows father. I shall know every one in a week.”

“Yes, that ’s true,” he said cautiously.

“How long have you been in Belmont?” asked Gloria, seeking to satisfy her own curiosity now that she had told him something about herself.

“Only a month or so.”

“I think it ’s the queerest thing in the world that we should meet here of all places. What are you doing here?”

And then Wright lied. He did not have time to consider what might be the ethics of

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the case. He listened to his heart, which may have made him a traitor to himself, and answered promptly:

“I’ve been doing some magazine writing and an occasional bit of newspaper and similar work.”

Had he been asked he could not have explained why he had not replied just as promptly that he was the owner of the *Belmont News*. What the real reason was he could not even explain to himself. Earlier in the evening he had talked glibly of a newspaper and its duty, and here an hour later he was denying his own under the fire of a pair of laughing eyes.

Gloria, whose ideas of business were as vague as her notions of politics or esoteric Buddhism, accepted his explanation as adequate; especially since she recalled that when in Europe he had been writing some magazine articles about the tariff. Since she never thought about the matter at all she never thought it strange that Belmont should be the place for such labors.

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“Have you ever been to Locust Lawn?” was her next question.

“I have that pleasure in store for me.”

This pleased her. Even before he came there were many little things she could do to make the house appear to better advantage. Although he had not yet made explanation of his failure to come to Paris, she found herself anxious to have him once more on the old footing of intimate friendship.

“Are you the same as in the mad old, glad old Paris days?” he asked.

She parried the question with another.

“Are you?”

“In some respects—only more so.”

“That’s a riddle. I hate riddles.” As he made no reply to this, she went on after the pause of which he had not taken advantage. “I hope we meet accidentally as often as you met our party abroad.”

“Was it accident?” he made bold to ask.

“Wasn’t it? You pretended it was.” Then the mischievous little sprite that ruled her tongue forced her to say, “I don’t blame

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you; I think Annabel Hitchcock is a beautiful girl. We all know you were crazy about her."

"Was I?" Rising inflection.

"Were n't you?" Also rising inflection.

"I'll admit I followed your party," he conceded.

"Now we're getting at the truth of the matter," she replied triumphantly. She felt she was teasing him, and she enjoyed it. "But why didn't you come on to Paris as you promised us? I'd like to know why we suddenly lost you. Was it another girl even prettier than Annabel?"

He did not join her when she laughed at the picture she had painted. All the light joyousness, the first which had been his since he had come to Belmont, died out of his face as he answered:

"After the Rhine I had hoped to meet you in Paris again. I looked forward to it as the beginning of another happy time. And then, in London, I received a cable—my mother was dying."



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"No," protested the girl, her eyes wide with pity.

"I had just time to catch the express for Liverpool that would put me aboard a liner an hour before she sailed. Miss Kerr, I know I thought of Paris, but things all seemed blurred to me, and so the message I had planned to you—not to Miss Hitchcock—was never sent."

"My poor friend."

"I reached America too late."

"I 'm so sorry," she sighed.

He had told the whole story. There was nothing more to say.

Both sat gazing into the open fire, busy with the thoughts of life and death. At last Gloria said quietly, with no more movement than if her thoughts had of themselves become vocal:

"Tell me of your mother. I never knew my mother, and so I envy you. You loved her?"

"I loved her," he began. Of his own affairs he seldom spoke, yet here was one who

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by her very presence made him glad to tell his story, and glad that it was a story he could tell with pride. "Son never loved mother more. And never did a son owe a mother more than I owed mine. I never knew my father. He was a good man, but not provident. When he died, mother found she had to support herself and me, an only child. O Miss Kerr, if you knew the bitterness of that struggle as I know it your heart would ache, too, at thought of it."

He paused, but something clutched at Gloria's throat. She could not speak.

"If mother could have a fault, it was her pride in me. I suppose when all the things she had planned for herself came to naught at my father's death she centered everything on me. It was n't right, of course, because I was n't worth it, but I tried, always tried to be worthy of that pride. And when she came to die—she wrote—"

He could n't go on, and Gloria, respecting his grief, was silent, too.

"I'm so glad she lived to see it all come

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true," Gloria said finally in a low tone. "It makes me think of what sacrifices my father has made for me. Just because he loved me and wanted me to have everything, he has given up what joy I might have been to him. Your story has taught me what I owe to him."

At this a sudden pain shot through the man's heart. It made him pledge himself before Heaven to protect her from the truth.

"My mother died when I was a baby, just as your father did," she explained wistfully. "And, as I told you, I envy you your mother. I wish you had written me. I could have at least sent my sympathy."

Now Gloria understood. All that year her thoughts had presented him other than in the true light.

"I wrote to you," he said gravely, "as soon as I wrote to any one. I did n't know your address, and ventured letters at Brown, Shipley's in London, and the American Express Company in Paris. I had heard you speak of both places, I thought. Both letters came back."

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“Give them to me. I want to keep them. We left Paris before you wrote, and hurried to Japan. Our mail was sent in care of Cook’s. What did you do—afterward?”

“I took a long rest. There was not a relative to share my sorrow with me. Now that I’ve come down out of the mountains and taken stock of life I find I have n’t a soul in the world—”

“Don’t say that, Joe.” She felt irresistibly drawn to him and put forth her hand and laid it on his sympathetically. He turned his own and let hers nestle within it.

“You’re still the same Gloria.”

“A year is n’t so long a time.”

And so they sat, with never a word to say, just that hand clasp of silent sympathy as they gazed into the fire.

## CHAPTER VI

**I**N the drawing-room, Kerr and Gilbert were just beginning a conversation which had for its theme the new turn affairs had taken, when Dr. Hayes passed through the hall on his way out with his wife. Sam Hayes was a member of the ring's inner shrine, and when the opportunity arose for what was termed a quick clean-up he was always a member of the syndicate. Therefore, the die having been cast, the judge called him in and announced the determination to push the franchise, a deal with which the coroner was already familiar. Far more than for any other reason Kerr was always willing to include him because his Belmont connections were so strong that he really lent an air of respectability to any undertaking.

“We are going to put a line to the stock-

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yards down Maple Avenue, Sam," began the attorney.

"So it's settled, is it?"

"Yes. You remember that vacant tract beyond Benton Park? The one that the Belden Brothers are thinking of cutting up for a residence addition? Well, you can't build a house in a mile of it when the road's through there, but it'll be worth a great deal more for factory sites."

"You'll have railroad connections, see?" explained Kerr.

"What's doing?" asked Sam, always keen for a dollar.

"Get an option on it," continued Gilbert, "and we'll cash in big."

"How long an option?"

The attorney looked at Kerr.

"Sixty days," said the latter.

"In that time we can ram the franchise through the council, and when that's done any bank'll lend us the money to take over the property."

Hayes went out to rejoin his wife, after

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promising to take the matter up in the morning.

Gilbert was just on the point of beginning a discussion of Gloria's future when a reporter from the *Banner* was announced.

"I'll come out to see him," said the lawyer, rising.

"No," objected Kerr, "have him in. I want to see him, too."

So Mr. James Winthrow, the young political reporter for the Belmont *Banner*, was admitted.

Winthrow, like the usual run of star reporters in a town the size of Belmont, was not only a shrewd young American, but he was also well aware of his great shrewdness. He had made as many political prognostications as any young man in the country, and they were quite as misleading in the main as were any of the others. Being on the machine paper and a loyal reporter, it followed as of course that he was a loyal machine man. Old Jerry Winthrow, the editor, was a distant relative, but friendly enough and interested

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enough in the youth to explain to him some of the turnings of the political wheels.

When Winthrow saw Kerr closeted with his legal adviser he could not suppress a whistle of surprise.

"Evening, Judge. Good evening, Mr. Kerr."

"How are you, Jim?" said Gilbert. The boss merely nodded an acknowledgment of the greeting. "What can I do for you?"

"Some stock-yard terminal rumors in the air, Judge; just rumors, and I can't find out a thing."

"I have n't heard a thing about it," the lawyer assured him. Then to Kerr, "Have you?"

"Not a word," answered the boss.

"Where did you get it?" queried Gilbert.

"Floating 'round town. I met Mr. Kendall just now going to the station, but he would n't talk. I know that the surveyors have been out. When Mr. Kendall said he 'd been here to dinner, Bilby, he 's our city editor, told me to see you."



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Gilbert turned to Kerr. The leader was a man of few words. He disposed of the matter under discussion with one sentence.

“Tell Bilby, Dave Kerr said not to print a line; he ’ll understand.”

That was all. It was an order, and the reporter accepted it as such. Things in Belmont were so well regulated that there was no danger from any source which would cause Kerr to think twice before sending his order to the city editor of the *Banner* by the reporter of that paper.

As Winthrow rose to depart, Kerr asked, “You have anything to do with the society columns?”

“Occasionally stumble on a story.”

“To-morrow put in that Miss Gloria Kerr has returned from a trip around the world.”

Winthrow put it down, and then asked with pencil poised, “Is she at Locust Lawn?”

“Yes,” said Kerr.

“Don’t write the item until I telephone you later in the evening,” interrupted Gilbert. He had been plotting and planning along social

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lines ever since Kerr had told him of Gloria's return. Several things he had already thought of flashed through his mind. The impossibility of Locust Lawn as a social center was one of these, and Gilbert had something to suggest before having the *Banner* write the story which would herald her return. "You can add this, though. Say that Judge and Mrs. Gilbert will issue invitations next week for a dance to introduce Miss Kerr."

No sooner had the reporter gone than Kerr turned to Gilbert and said with what was for him unaccustomed warmth:

"That 's mighty good of you, Amos."

"Not at all." Then the lawyer went on in an injured tone, "I 'm only sorry that you put the franchise up to me as a trade. I 'm not doing it for that."

"I knew you 'd do it for the girl's sake, but I want you to get what you can out of it, Amos. I owe you that much."

Gilbert was glad that his wife entered at this minute, for a discussion of Gloria's social future probably would not bring out all sides

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to the question without a woman being a party to the conversation.

“I just have to talk to some one,” Mrs. Gilbert confessed immediately, “and I did n’t have the heart to go into the library. I peeped in just now and they were sitting in front of the fire laughing and talking and appearing to be having the best time in the world. I don’t know why, but it made me think of the times when you used to come to see me, Amos.”

Husband and wife smiled at each other, and he said:

“You were a beautiful girl, Julia.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Mrs. Gilbert went on, conscious of the compliment but not desirous of herself making a comparison. “Gloria is a beautiful girl, and what is more, I can see that she has a beautiful character. I’m so sorry she has been away so long.”

“What could I do, ma’am?” asked Kerr. “I couldn’t take care of her at Locust Lawn.”

Locust Lawn had been in Gilbert’s mind all the time, and he had waited only to sound

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his wife before speaking. Her enthusiasm was such, as evidenced in what she had just said, that he thought now was the proper time to broach the subject.

“There’s only one thing to do, Mr. Kerr,” he said. “Gloria must come in and stay with us. Locust Lawn is all right as a home for you, but as it stands it is no place for a young lady in society; especially, since you want me to be plain spoken, no place for a young lady who has had such advantages as your daughter.”

“Exactly, exactly,” assented Kerr. He had seen that, and it had been one of the thorns in his flesh all day.

Mrs. Gilbert was quick to see that it was the only thing to be done. She had become as much interested in Gloria as had her husband, and now she added her own invitation to his.

“The Judge has expressed my own ideas exactly,” she said. “Mr. Kerr, you must let her come to us. We have fallen in love with her already.”

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“Have you, ma’am?” Kerr asked. “Then I’m awfully glad.”

“Make the invitation for a month,” Gilbert directed, “and then we can ask her to stay on.”

“I’ll do nothing of the kind,” said his wife airily, as she started on what was to her a pleasant errand; “I’ll ask her for the rest of her natural life, and if she wants to stay that long she’s welcome.”

## CHAPTER VII

**G**LORIA plunged into the work of making over Locust Lawn according to her own ideas with her usual enthusiasm. Accompanied by Mrs. Gilbert, she haunted the architect's office, carrying with her magazines containing pictures and descriptions of beautiful homes. When the plans for the alterations were finally approved, David Kerr learned with a sigh of relief that the changes could be made without driving him from the shelter of his own roof.

At the same time that Gloria was planning for the changes in the country place she and Mrs. Gilbert were also busy preparing for the ball which would serve as her formal introduction to Belmont society. Her time was so engaged that she thought the suggestion of her hostess an excellent one when Mrs. Gilbert said that it might be better not to become

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tangled up with too many social engagements at a time when it was more vital to see that the Locust Lawn alterations were properly under way. The girl was aware, from what she had heard her father and others say, that things were dull at present, and she did not wish to spur them into a premature activity. When the ball was given for her it would be time enough to begin.

Mrs. Gilbert was not letting things drift, although the daughter of David Kerr was not aware of it. Every one in Belmont knew what Gloria did not: That she was about to make a great effort to secure recognition. Belmont was not in a receptive mood. Its first thought was that she was the child of a shrewd political trickster who had fattened at the expense of the town. The offspring of the leopard should not hope to be without spots.

Mrs. Gilbert was clever enough to have girls to luncheon whom she thought might become interested in Gloria. They came, and in the majority of cases surprised Gloria by their charming manners and their beautiful clothes.

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Her court was to be even more brilliant than she had dreamed. The girls were invited one at a time, to give both Gloria and the visitor the opportunity of becoming well acquainted.

The luncheon guests came to call afterward, but by a strange mischance it was always when Gloria was not at home. She would go to the architect's office with Mrs. Gilbert, and would find on her return that several cards had been left for her. The ball was so near that she made no attempt to pay any calls herself. She was too busy.

Although railing at the fate which took him away most of the time, the first three weeks after Gloria's removal to town were spent by Judge Gilbert in Chicago. Occasionally he ran over for a day, but even then his wife and their guest saw little of him. This would have made their evenings hang heavy on their hands had it not been for Joe Wright. He got into the habit of dropping in after dinner every evening and several times a week Mrs. Gilbert had him to dine with them. Late in the afternoons he and Gloria often drove to-



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gether, the season of the year keeping them most of the time on the city streets. Once he drove with her to Locust Lawn, but as it was late when they reached there he did not get out, sitting in the runabout while Gloria ran into the house for a few minutes.

Neither Wright nor Gloria ever made an effort to direct the conversation into the intimate channel it had taken the night they first had met in Belmont. One might almost have thought they had agreed to consider themselves merely good friends, so impersonal were they in what they said. For this there was a reason; rather, there were two reasons, his and hers.

Wright was keeping a firm grip on himself because he knew the truth, and was afraid. Gloria was self-possessed and would not have permitted him to pass the border of friendship, had he dared, because she wished to know Belmont well. Even a hint of an entangling alliance would prove a hindrance. Thus it was that each was happy in the other's company. And if perchance they looked the

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sentiment that each had inwardly resolved not to breathe, they were happier still in the thought that some day their dreams would come true.

The paper was occasioning Wright no great anxiety. Somewhat to his surprise the advertising revenue was showing most gratifying gains caused by the increase of local business. The *Banner* had more advertising, but the new owner of the afternoon paper had no cause to complain. Even his advertising manager could not explain it. Main Street merchants who had been out of the paper for years began to send in copy without solicitation. This made the head of the advertising department think that the millennium was about due. The real reason, unknown to every one except the merchants receiving the message, was that Dave Kerr had sent out the tip for them to throw some of their patronage to the *News*.

This was a shrewd move on the part of Kerr. He wanted Wright to have such a volume of business that if he should order all the adver-

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tising he could influence cut off, the paper would be instantly crippled. If the *News* had not much business, then anything Kerr might cause to be dropped out would only show that his power was slight. If he had to strike a blow he wanted it to be with a sledge hammer.

Another important consideration which led him to take this step was that the merchants might believe, and he tipped it off in a manner which would be most apt to make them jump to that conclusion, that he was himself interested in the *News*. This would tend to minimize Wright's influence if he should attempt a crusade, since the public would wink and say, "It's all a bluff, old man Kerr himself is interested in the paper." The boss even calculated that this would be strengthened by the frequency with which Wright was seen in his daughter's company. He was not looking for trouble, he never welcomed it, but he sought always to be prepared when it came.

During her first weeks at Mrs. Gilbert's Gloria saw little of her father. She had at first frequently dropped in at his office, but he

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had intimated that it was no place for her. Sometimes she would be at Locust Lawn when Tom brought him home in the afternoon. When Judge Gilbert was home from Chicago once he dined with them. Every day, however, she talked to him for some time over the telephone. He always seemed interested, apologized for not seeing her more, and let her rattle on until she had quite exhausted the news of the day. Occasionally he complained to her of his rheumatism—no one had ever heard him speak of it before—and she would beg him to take good care of himself, since it was with him that she wished to dance first at her ball.

There was one girl whom Mrs. Gilbert sought as a friend for Gloria. She mentioned it to her husband the first day their guest arrived, and he suggested that she be invited to lunch the next day. Accordingly Mrs. Gilbert telephoned Miss Laura Piper and asked her. For the following day, however, Miss Piper had an engagement. When several other days were mentioned she had engage-

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ments for those also. Could she have been made to accept Gloria, the task of conquering Belmont would instantly become less arduous. Her father was head of the great Piper Mining Company, and her family was looked upon as one of the most exclusive in the whole state. If Laura Piper would, she could make it extremely pleasant for Gloria. But Laura Piper had her own and her family's ideas about the Kerr breed, and no matter how nice Gloria might be, she was still her father's daughter.

Mrs. Gilbert reported her lack of success to her husband on his return from his first trip to Chicago, and he mentioned it, almost casually, to David Kerr when they met the next day. The boss inquired the particulars, but made no comment. That he was not unmindful of the episode developed two days later when the Piper Coal Company received a complaint from the secretary of the school board that there was an undue quantity of slate in the last coal furnished the public schools. While worrying with this, the com-

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pany's legal department sent word to the president that the city solicitor had just notified the company that one of the important spurs into an uptown coal yard crossed a street without authority of law.

Old man Piper swore by all the gods in mythology that it was the worst outrage ever perpetrated upon him in all his business life. He had but a day or two to catch his breath before Mrs. Gilbert telephoned at the dinner hour asking Laura to luncheon the next day. The whole thing dawned on him when Laura flounced back from the telephone and announced petulantly that she would not meet that odious Gloria Kerr. He said nothing until after dinner, then calling Laura aside he ordered her to telephone Mrs. Gilbert and withdraw her refusal. His pocketbook having been hit, Piper was willing to make some sacrifice to determine the reason and what he was to expect in the way of further attack. He kept his mouth closed, and waited.

Laura returned from the luncheon with a favorable opinion of Gloria, but she could not

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forget her parentage. Upon being questioned she told her father she did not care to put Gloria on her visiting list.

“Suppose I have some one to visit me who asks: ‘Who is that girl you introduced me to?’ complained Laura. ‘And I’ll have to say, ‘That ’s Gloria Kerr, the boss’s daughter.’ Then what will the visiting girl think of Belmont society, and what will she think of me? I’m sure I would be surprised if I went to visit any one and they introduced me to the son or daughter of a man like Kerr.”

“Laura,” answered her father, “I think you’d better go down to New York for a couple of months.”

And two days later Laura went, after having called when Gloria was not at home. She never knew why her father urged her to go.

Piper felt it would be cheaper to pay the expense of a New York trip than to have his company stand the continuous annoyances by which it could be worried, if what he suspected was true. When he inquired about coal for the school board the complaint department

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reported that the secretary had been mollified but hoped it would not happen again. As for the city solicitor, the legal department refrained from asking anything about the track across the street and that official never wrote again.

Old man Piper kept his mouth shut, but he knew he had been taught a lesson.

Kerr was keeping a sharp eye on things, but his hand was suspected rather than seen in any move that was made. As the time for the ball approached, his rheumatism troubled him more and more, and upon the advice of Dr. Hayes he decided to go to Esmeralda Springs to drink the water. Sam Hayes took him down and came back with the comforting report that he was already better. He was not well enough, however, to return for the ball.

The ball given in honor of Miss Gloria Kerr at the Belmont Club by Judge and Mrs. Gilbert was a memorable affair. The ballroom was crowded, and Gloria deserved the praise she received from every quarter on her beauty,



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her cleverness, and her light-hearted temperament. She did not hear the expressions of regret that she was the daughter of David Kerr. The next morning the Belmont *Banner* had a two-column head over the story, and gave a long list of names preceded by "among those invited were," instead of by the usual "among those present were." There were a number notable by their absence, but there being a large crowd present and she being a stranger, Gloria did not know this. She was too busy with the men to think of what girls were present.

Truth to tell, it was a fairly representative assemblage, drawn together out of regard for Judge and Mrs. Gilbert and also by curiosity to see what kind of girl Gloria Kerr was. If the president of the Piper Coal Company had stopped the poker game at the Belmont Club the night before to tell his experience there would have been several young ladies among those at the ball who did not lend the charm of their presence to that occasion.

When Gloria danced with Wright, she

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searched the line to find a Belmont man to compare with him, and to her thinking there was not one in the same class. As for Wright, his search was over the night they had met again in Belmont.

In their first dance, holding her close as if to shield her from all the world, he called to mind the day at Versailles when together they had wandered through the gardens. Then he had repeated some verses from the book he had given her on her birthday. Now as they danced he whispered:

“Do you remember

Spring in the hills, Beloved,  
On the side of a meadowed slope;  
And love in our hearts, Beloved,  
Love and Spring and Hope.”

“I remember. We were going out there again, but you never came back; and so I went alone.”

“I wish you had taken our book,” he said. He always referred to the book of verses as being their joint property. “It would have told you what I was not there to say.”

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Gloria smiled. Never a word had been said, but each understood.

“I knew one thing the book said,” she confessed. “It was what I said—and said more times than one:

Come over the sea to me, to me,  
Come over the sea to me.  
The little ships go sailing by  
But never a ship brings thee!”

They danced, forgetful of everything but that they were together. A man had cried in the wilderness of the world for his mate and she had answered.

Wright would have gone farther, have made a formal declaration, but first he wanted several things settled. He felt that he could not stay in Belmont if he married Gloria. How to get rid of the paper was a question. He hoped through a newspaper broker to trade it for one in some other place. Then he and Gloria could begin life there together. The *News* was beginning to make money, paying its way and leaving something for future payments on the property. Best of all, there was

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no fight on his hands which would hold him in Belmont.

Mrs. Gilbert came into Gloria's room to kiss her good night after the ball. When they had talked over the affair for an hour the girl cried in the ecstasy of her joy.

"Oh, Mrs. Gilbert, tonight I am the happiest girl in the whole wide world."

On that very night Alderman Grunewald introduced an ordinance giving the Belmont Interurban Railway, a new corporation, right of way down Maple Avenue and making provision that a small depot should be provided for the convenience of patrons at Benton Park.

## CHAPTER VIII

**W**HEN Wright reached his office the morning after the ball, he found his attorney, Arthur Morrison, waiting for him. He had been drawn to Morrison the first time he had met him and had asked him to take care of the paper's legal business. In this his judgment had not been warped by a sudden friendship, for the young lawyer was worthy of his confidence. Like Judge Gilbert, he had risen from an humble home, but unlike the adviser of Belmont corporations he had made his way independently of the malign influences which constantly seem to seek to attract young men of talent who follow the law as a profession. To him both as his legal adviser and his friend, Wright had talked freely and had rejoiced to learn that Morrison's ideals and hopes for Belmont were the same as his own.

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“Even if you had n’t asked me to watch things with you while you are still a stranger to Belmont,” Morrison began, “I think I would have come to you. Last night while we were enjoying ourselves a bill was introduced in the council for a car line down Maple Avenue.”

“I saw an account of it in the *Banner*, and thought it strange nothing had been made public before it was introduced. Who wants the franchise?”

“They’re under cover. It’s the Belmont Interurban Company, a New Jersey corporation, and the men named as incorporators are only dummies.”

“That is n’t usual, is it, with honest men?”

“I don’t know anything more about it than you do, but you’d better investigate.”

“When does the bill have its next reading?” asked Wright, after considering what was the paper’s best move.

“Not until Tuesday night.”

“That gives us five days. If we make a noise won’t they call a special meeting and push it through?”

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“Kerr is n’t likely to do that. He’s interested, I suppose, but how?”

“We’ll get busy to-day,” Wright said decisively. “A few pointed questions on the front page may bring them out from under cover.”

In the conference which ensued the two men discussed every possible phase of the question, yet they never dreamed that it was part of the stock-yards scheme. What aroused suspicion as much as anything else was that there was nothing they could find on which to base suspicion. When Morrison left it was with the intention of scrutinizing a copy of the proposed ordinance carefully.

Wright sent a reporter to interview Alderman Grunewald, and all other reporters were instructed to find out what the public thought of it and any definite facts that could be brought to light. The city editor himself took an hour off to go to the office of Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum, who it was learned had given Grunewald the bill to present for them.

The drag net which the *News* spread did

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not seem productive of results calculated to bring anything to light. Alderman Grunewald had introduced it at the request of his good friends Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum and knew nothing about it.

Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum said that the proposed franchise spoke for itself, and that the road would prove of inestimable benefit to Belmont, since in the near future it would be extended to Corona, and all the people of that little town and the villages along the line would do their shopping in Belmont. The incorporators were Chicago men with plenty of capital back of them.

Wright telegraphed a Chicago news agency to find out who the incorporators were. At his suggestion the city editor tried to get Kerr at Esmeralda Springs by telephone, but was unsuccessful.

Only one clue was found which of itself was suspicious, and it was not one which could be used that afternoon. The courthouse reporter had dropped into the county surveyor's office, and talked about surveying in general



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and the work in Belmont County in particular. Was anything going on just then? This elicited the reply that the spring was not far enough advanced for the usual work, but that the stock-yards company had had men out. What were they doing? They were seeing how they could save their tracks along the river and rearranging the quarantine tracks for Texas cattle which were by themselves to the east of the main yards. This was all the courthouse man brought back to the office, but it was duly presented to Wright by the city editor.

That afternoon Belmont rubbed its eyes as it looked at the front page of the *News*. In the last column under an extended head was a story about the proposed car line down Maple Avenue. It was not replete with facts and figures, but it asked a great many questions and contained several interviews which said nothing. Even the property owners along Maple Avenue who had consented to the line and then been pledged to secrecy until the matter was made public by the introduction of the

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bill in the council, knew nothing more than that Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum had secured their consent.

The Chicago News agency did not send what information it gathered until too late for use on that day.

Sam Hayes bought a paper on the street, read the story, and rushed for a telephone. He paid two dollars and thirty cents for the privilege, one could not call it pleasure, of talking with Kerr at Esmeralda Springs. He read the paper to the boss, the front page story and the trenchant short editorial of inquiry. Kerr asked that he be connected with Gilbert, but already the judge was trying to get Esmeralda Springs, having seen the *News* just a few minutes after Hayes. Their conversation was short, Kerr knew the facts, and it was mainly a discussion of how the *Banner* should treat the matter in the morning. The boss decided his paper should insist that the *News* was trying to knock the town. The attack was to be upon the *News*, thus diverting attention from the real issue. This command,

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properly phrased, was dropped into the eager ear of Deacon Winthrow, and he proceeded to write a scathing editorial holding up to scorn the paper which would try to barricade the path of the car of progress. The deacon felt proud of his editorial when he read it in the proof, and was warmed with a self-satisfied glow to think that he had thought of it. He still lived in the age of personal journalism and to lambast the other fellow personally was part of his editorial creed.

Before the paper came out, Wright telephoned Gloria that he would be unable to drive with her but that he would call in the evening. They had reached the point in their fast friendship where she was not unwilling to pout and let him know how disappointed she was.

It was four o'clock when Morrison arrived at the *News* office with a copy of the proposed franchise. As he threw it on the table in Wright's private office he exclaimed:

"If that goes through, the company can do anything according to its provision except commit murder."

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“I suspected as much,” replied Wright. “What right of way have they?”

Morrison went to the map of Belmont on the wall and located the city terminus of the proposed line.

“Here’s where they start on their own tracks,” he explained. “You see, there’s a provision in the charter of the Belmont Traction Company whereby any interurban line can use its tracks into the heart of the city upon payment of a fair rental. Here’s the Townsend Park Line coming down Bluff Street, and right here where Bluff Street crosses Maple Avenue the Interurban’s own tracks will start.”

“Then how does it run?”

“South on Maple Avenue and Maple road, to a private right of way which begins east of the stock-yards and parallels the county road to Corona.”

Wright studied the map earnestly.

“You see, I’m too new to know that neighborhood,” he said. “Why did they pick Maple Avenue?”

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“It’s the only street they can use in that part of town. It’s the natural artery for that new district out there, since there are hills on both sides of it.”

Wright still puzzled over the map.

“What are those red lines crossing Maple Avenue about two blocks south of Bluff Street?” was his next question.

“Those? They are the railway tracks of all the lines entering Belmont except those that come down the river from the north.”

“Are they going to build a viaduct there?”

“Nothing is said about it.”

The new venture would be a good thing for Belmont—if the company would confine itself to good works. The most objectionable thing was the lack of frankness on the part of the men back of the enterprise. Here was a corporation seeking to serve the public and not taking the public into its confidence.

While Morrison and the publisher of the *News* were canvassing the situation, a telegram from the Chicago News Agency was delivered to Wright. It read:

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“Hammersley is the private secretary of Adolphus Koerner, Koerner & Co., packers. Others are clerks in law office of Kendall, Strang & Kendall.”

“By George!” exclaimed Wright. “The stock-yards company!”

Then he remembered what the county surveyor had innocently told. There could be no doubt of it. The stock-yards company was making some move which it did not dare make openly.

“It looks like it,” assented Morrison. “Have you any idea what they want?”

“Not the slightest. They’re not fighting the traction company, I know.”

This, thought Wright, explained Gilbert’s many visits to Chicago recently. The stock-yards attorney had apparently no connection with the new company, but Wright and Morrison, too, when it was explained to him, were both of the opinion that he was directing every move. If he was in it, David Kerr was in it;

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and if David Kerr was in it, he was not in it for his health.

In seeking to unravel the tangled skein they now had a loose end to work with. They could not imagine, however, why the stock-yards company was entering the street car field in such a peculiar manner.

Wright sat with his chair tilted back against the wall, his hands behind his head, gazing at the map on the wall opposite.

“Morrison, a newspaper man has to trust in many cases to his sixth sense; that’s his nose for news, for the big story. Often he misses fire, but when he does hit the bull’s-eye everybody knows it.” Such was Wright’s preamble as he brought his chair down on the floor and prepared to tell the lawyer what his sixth sense had made him feel was the real object of the game. “The stock-yards company is preparing to steal a street.”

“What!” gasped Morrison. “What makes you think so?”

“Everything. See how the river is eating

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up the only tracks to the stock-yard. They've got to get to the yards farther east. Maple Avenue is the easiest way. The franchise says nothing about what kind of cars are to run, how they are to be propelled, or what they are to carry. I'll bet they are going to run cattle cars filled with hogs and sheep and cattle down Maple Avenue, and pull them with steam engines, too."

"I won't believe it," protested the lawyer. "Maple Avenue is a residence street!"

"The stock-yards company is a foreign corporation interested only in dividends."

"Look at Benton Park!"

"Yes, take a good look; you won't want to in a year from now."

"I don't believe it."

"Any way, that's the theory I'm going on. If it is correct, I've struck the nail on the head with my first guess. If it is wrong, I'll keep hammering away until the public demands and is given the truth. If I'm wrong, then they'll soon be smoked out. They can't stand being so misinterpreted when asking the



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public for a favor. But I'm right, I tell you. They're going to connect with the railway tracks where they cross Maple Avenue two blocks below Bluff Street. Such a belt line railway will be extremely valuable."

It was after six o'clock before they decided to leave the office. As every pro and con of the situation had not been exhausted, they adjourned to the Belmont Club for dinner and there continued puzzling over the franchise and its meaning.

Shortly before eight o'clock Wright drained his coffee cup and looked across the table at his companion.

"Doing anything tonight?" he inquired.

"No. Nothing on hand that I know of."

"I'm calling on Miss Kerr to-night. I want you to go with me; I can't go alone."

"I shall be very glad to," replied the young lawyer, successfully concealing his surprise.

Wright realized the fight was on. He also knew what Gloria had come to mean to him, and after what they had said last night he was afraid to see her alone. Now his first duty

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was to the public, that public which so often accepts benefits and sacrifices all unconscious of its own gain and what the cost has been. For the general good, for an ideal, for his belief in what a paper should be, he was putting aside—just for the time, his heart told him—the one woman who could make him supremely happy.

The deferring of hope was heavy upon Wright's heart as with Morrison he walked in silence to Gilbert's house. To himself he kept repeating some verses from their "birthday book":

In the twilight we parted,  
In the night broken-hearted  
We dreamed a sweet dream.  
Then we met and we parted  
Again broken-hearted,  
But dreams come again.

## CHAPTER IX

**T**HE story Wright had printed the first day and the reply it drew from the *Banner* the next morning caused the *News* to be awaited with undisguised eagerness on the second afternoon. This was heightened on the part of the men in the syndicate interested in the franchise by the pertinent questions put to them in the morning by *News* reporters. David Kerr was called on the telephone half a dozen times by his lieutenants, and arrangements were made to have a line open to Esmeralda Springs at three-thirty, the hour when the *News* was issued.

Although they were prepared to discount some of the story because of the questions asked them, yet none of the ring men was prepared for a revelation of the scheme such as the *News* made. Black headlines ran across four columns and the story also took up most

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of the second page. There was a map of the proposed inter-urban route, and pictures of pretty homes on Maple Avenue. But from one end of the story to the other there was no mention of David Kerr or of the local backing being given the bill before the council. It was expressly stated that the incorporators of the new company were merely dummies and that they were acting in the interest of the stock-yards company.

Amos Gilbert in an interview denied any knowledge of the transaction, saying that his connection with the stock-yards company was merely nominal and that he did not even know if the company was interested in the line proposed. He did not see how, as a company, it could be.

Gilbert sat in his office as soon as he secured a paper and read the story word for word over the telephone to Kerr. The latter promptly announced that he would be home the next day, and ordered that Gloria be taken from Belmont on any pretext whatever for a few days until the fight had been allowed to die

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down. The next day was Sunday, on which Wright published no paper, and Kerr would be home before another issue appeared. He agreed with Gilbert that the *Banner* ought to ridicule the alleged exposé.

Sunday night, much to her surprise but not much against her will, Gloria went to St. Louis with Mrs. Gilbert to pick out furniture for Locust Lawn. She did not know that her father had returned from Esmeralda Springs that morning and had been closeted all afternoon with Gilbert and John Kendall, who had hurried to Belmont in response to a telegram. The girl had not seen Wright all day, nor had she seen him Saturday, but there came from him a box of roses at noon. Little witch that she was, she meant to surprise him by sending him a note of thanks from St. Louis. She knew he would join her and Mrs. Gilbert there on her hint that they would be glad to see him.

Wright received her note and perceived the slightly veiled invitation, but he was too busy even to answer. It was a week that contained

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more excitement than Belmont had seen since, a frontier village, it had struggled with the question of whether the state should secede or remain in the Union. David Kerr found himself confronted by a formidable line of battle. The *Banner* kept pounding away at the *News*, but the afternoon paper was not to be diverted from its purpose. The citizens on Maple Avenue formed the Maple League, and wore buttons on which were a maple leaf and the legend, "Help us save our homes." The car line was to run through the seventh and eighth wards, and the aldermen in those wards were deluged with letters, post cards, telephone calls and personal visits. Finally they went to David Kerr and begged him that if he had enough votes without them to let them oppose the franchise as they were in the midst of their canvass for re-election. The boss held them in line.

The bill had its second reading at the council meeting Tuesday, but under orders from Kerr nothing further was done with it at that time. He began to worry about the approach-

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ing election. What to him was the passing of the bill at that time compared to the control of the city for the next two years? If he let it sleep now and the election went his way then it could be passed soon after. By the time another election rolled around, Belmont would have forgotten.

So it came about that the democrats tried to forget the franchise. When the bill disappeared they were loud in their denunciation of the republican thieves who had stolen it. With this outburst they were willing to subside and forget the matter, but this the *News* would not permit. Wright kept it to the front and the democrats were forced to accept it as an issue. The continuous attitude of apology necessitated by this was weakening them every day. The independent wave which had been sweeping over the country had been late in striking Belmont, there having been no newspaper to marshal the forces, but now it was increasing to the volume of a tidal wave which Kerr would have hard work pouring oil upon.

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The editor of the *News* recognized that it was only a Pyrrhic victory he had won by securing the shelving of the franchise for the present. He was not blind to the fact that the franchise would bob up serenely after election. Now that he had aroused the town and had committed himself to a fight against the ring, he determined to carry it on. It had not been his purpose, before the franchise bill had drawn his fire, to enter with great heat into the coming election campaign, but he saw that the impetus given the opponents of the machine would carry them well on toward victory at the polls. Carrying the election would be a great advertisement for the paper. If it lost, the *News* could not be any worse off than it was now.

Kerr forgot none of the precautions he had taken in being prepared to embarrass Wright in his work if the occasion should arise. The merchants who, through Kerr's influence, had patronized the *News*, suddenly withdrew their advertising. Many who had been in before the paper had changed hands now ceased to



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use its columns. If a grocery store was using the *News* and furnishing supplies to the workhouse or the jail, it faced the alternative of losing a fat account or confining its advertising to the *Banner*. The proprietor, being part of the machine, else nothing would ever have been purchased from him for the city's use, promptly gave up the *News*. It was the same with meat markets. Other lines of business were approached in other ways, but the result was always the same,—a loss of advertising revenue to the *News*. Even the railroads were derelict in delivering his white paper, and Wright spent many an anxious hour tracing cars from the mill to find them lost in the Belmont yards.

One valuable source of information was developed by the *News* in a former machine hanger-on named Jack Durken. He came to work in the circulation department of the paper, and Wright first heard of him through the circulation manager. At Wright's request the man came to his office and from his story the editor gathered that he had not re-

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ceived fair treatment at the hands of the other gangsters. He had lived in the disreputable first ward, and had had trouble with Mike Noonan, a ward leader. For his work he had been made a street cleaning inspector, but after having incurred the ire of Noonan had lost his job.

Nothing the enemy did was able to keep Wright from publishing a paper every day. Every issue was a constant reminder to Belmont that things were not as they should be and that the way to remedy conditions was to defeat the city machine at the polls. The editor spent all his daylight hours at his office, and often was there until late in the night in conference with various leaders. The republicans had some old scores to settle, and this was their chance. The postmaster was usually to be found on Kerr's side, although under cover, but this time he could not afford to use his influence for the democrats in city affairs—even for a consideration. The democratic boss knew the game too well to press him.

In the last days of the campaign the re-

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publican leaders learned with surprise that Senator McMinty, the state republican boss, was coming to Belmont for a day. They had not sent for him, and were at a loss to account for the visit. He had not taken any one into his confidence, merely saying he was coming on business. Why he should journey from Washington to Belmont for so short a stay they could not understand. He gave it out that he was making a flying visit to his home, but he came straight to Belmont. Only two men besides the senator knew his mission, the emissary who carried the message to Washington and the man who sent for him. David Kerr wanted to see him.

It was only three days before election when Senator McMinty visited Belmont. He went to the Hotel Belmont and took a suite of rooms, but did not register. After talking to David Kerr over the telephone, he ordered an early luncheon for two served in his private parlor. Kerr arrived before the table was spread and immediately began to explain the situation. All through the meal the two

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men talked, McMinty questioning and Kerr explaining.

Practical politics was the business of Senator James McMinty just as it was of Mr. David Kerr. He had grown up in a republican stronghold and had seen that his chance was with that party, just as Kerr had seen that in Belmont his success lay in corralling the democratic party. Jim McMinty liked to pose before the public and to make flamboyant speeches. Kerr preferred to sit in his dingy real estate office and pull the strings that made the puppets dance. To him speech making and posing were like the tinsel on a drum major's uniform. He cared only for power, it was immaterial to him how gaudy glory was apportioned.

"It looks like he's got you in bad, Dave," said the senator. "I don't see how I can help you this trip."

Kerr slowly set down his glass of water and straightened up in his chair, for he knew that the deal was now under way. He had played

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fair with Jim McMinitry and told him just the exact situation.

“Lots o’ things can happen, Jim. I’ve decided to get his paper, but I need votes. It’s too close to election. You ain’t going to let him play you for a sucker. We’ve got to clean him, or he’ll turn on you just as he has on me.”

“I guess I ought to wait till he does,” was the cautious response. “I’ve got enough troubles without going out and lassoing a young grizzly bear.”

“He ain’t got no party,” urged Kerr, “and you know how it happens in them towns where such a paper gits a start. He’s got these fools in Belmont believing he’s George Washington come to life again.”

“I’m sorry for you, Dave, but honestly I don’t see where I can help out any. It would give me too black an eye, because the boys here have set their hearts on winning this time.”

Kerr saw that McMinitry was forcing his

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hand, and he decided to approach the situation from another side.

"The next legislature 'll elect your successor," he suggested.

"I 'm going to be my own successor," asserted the senator.

"It's going to be a hot fight," continued Kerr, unmindful of McMinistry's remark. "The state will swing back to the democrats, but nobody knows how the legislature 'll be on joint ballot."

"It's going to be republican if I can have anything to say about it."

"Well, you don't seem to be going about it very actively," retorted Kerr with the nearest approach to sarcasm he permitted himself during the interview. "Even if the legislature is republican, you've got a fight on your hands. There's Congressman Jenkinson and old man Graham down in Washington County. He's almost as strong with the G. A. R. vote as you are, and his part of the state ain't had no recognition for a long time."

McMinistry did not answer at once. He

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got up from the table and walked to the window. When at last he turned to Kerr the question had been gone over thoroughly in his mind.

"Well, Dave," he asked with a smile, "what 's the answer?"

"You 've got to knife your ticket, so 's these fool reformers can't carry Belmont."

"What 'd I get out of it?" drawled out the senator.

"Seven votes in the house and two in the senate."

Again the republican apostle of practical politics sat back and took stock of the situation. Belmont was nothing to him. It mattered nothing at all to him whether the town was democratic or republican as far as city affairs were concerned. Nine votes were not to be despised. He was cautious, however, and wanted particulars.

"How you going to deliver?" he asked.

"We 've got that many to run this fall and I 'll let the republicans have it their own way. Name your men now if you want to."

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“That many’s bound to make the legislature republican on joint ballot.”

Kerr knew this, but he was quite willing to change the political complexion of the legislature of a great state, perhaps hamper the governor in wise and necessary legislation and keep the state from having a democratic senator, all to hold Belmont for his own. McMinty was no less willing to change victory into defeat and hand the city over to the rapacity of the Interurban Railway Company, only to retain his senatorial office.

“All right,” he consented, “but you’ve got to do two things: take care of some of the boys and muzzle the *News*. I can’t have that paper making trouble for me.”

“I’ll take care of the boys all right, and I’ve told you what I’m going to do—I’m going to buy the *News*.”

“Can you?”

“I’ve got to have it, and I don’t care how, but it’s got to be mine.”

“Got any idea?” asked the senator.

“No, but every man’s got his price, Jim, in



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some form or other." If he had had time for reflection, David Kerr would have enjoyed this remark, since it was given a humorous turn by the fact that he had just discovered the price of the junior senator from his own state.

"I'll go up to the post office and call on some of the boys," said McMinty as Kerr rose to go. "I'll have to tell Davidson and Peake. When you get word to them that the *News* is friendly, they'll pass the word along. You've got three days; that ought to be plenty of time, but you must have the paper or the deal's off. Who'll take it?"

"I don't know yet who we'll get to take it."

"I'll take it."

"Not much," Kerr replied grimly. "I'm going to put it where it won't be no more trouble to me, and it's going to be run from my office."

## CHAPTER X

**W**HEN Gloria Kerr returned from St. Louis she found half a hundred calling cards awaiting her. The women she was anxious to meet had called while she was out of town. Those who delayed their visits until her return were people whom she readily recognized as being quite on the outer fringe of society. In them she was not interested. When Gloria went to return the calls of those whom she had come to know were regarded as the first families of Belmont, she found no one at home.

Somewhat mortified, but making no confession of her feelings even to Mrs. Gilbert, Gloria threw herself into the work of remodeling Locust Lawn with all the vigor she would otherwise have expanded upon social duties. Her active superintendence kept her a good part of the time in the country, although she

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still made her home with Mrs. Gilbert. Sometimes she would pass the night at Locust Lawn out of a sense of duty to her father. The evenings spent in his company were not ones of unalloyed pleasure. More and more she was coming to acknowledge to herself that her father did not, could not enter into her life, into the activities which gave her pleasure.

Kerr honestly tried, but it was impossible. For one thing, he was engaged in a heated political campaign, fighting to retain supremacy. Gloria, on her side, saw that she had been rebuffed socially, and was not on close enough terms of intimacy with her father to tell him about it. The girl knew that he had been the social leader in Belmont, and she was ashamed that she had not been able to win all hearts as he had done.

Gloria's admiration of her father's powers did not lessen upon their better acquaintance. Strange as it may seem, her loyalty to him was strengthened by each turn of fortune's wheel which thrust her back upon herself. The frivolous veneer in her nature was being

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worn away, and the real Gloria was beginning to appear. Kerr's was indeed a powerful personality, and Gloria was coming to see why he was so successful. A woman's intuition and not an understanding of the facts in the case was the girl's tutor. She hugged to her heart the comparison of Joe Wright and her father. In the younger man she saw some of the traits which made her father a power—magnetism, reserve strength, and a logical mind. Wright had that and more: he had all the social graces. To her, however, his greatest appeal was that he was youth, eternal youth, and love.

What Gloria could not understand was why Wright was avoiding her. In her ears she could hear him whisper as he had that night:

Spring on the hills, Beloved,  
On the side of a meadowed slope;  
And Love in our hearts, Beloved,  
Love and Spring and Hope.

Now was spring here, and hope and the promise of love, but he did not come. After her return from St. Louis she had waited in vain. Then she had asked to have him invited

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to dinner. When Mrs. Gilbert telephoned him he refused owing to press of business, but asked to speak to Gloria. She came to the telephone and they had a pleasant chat. He told her that he was busy finishing some magazine articles which the editor was pressing him for, and that he was working night and day. For the time being Gloria accepted this explanation. The day of their telephone conversation there came from him a box of red roses at the dinner hour.

It must not be thought that Gloria was entirely cut off from society. It was the society she craved, the intimate association with certain ones, which she was not finding. To all the formal functions Gloria was invited, but she no longer cared for big balls as formerly. Her dances were all taken, but there was something in the atmosphere which dampened her spirits. Although every one was superficially pleasant, there was no cordiality in it all. So she busied herself more and more with remodeling her country home.

One day at Locust Lawn a man engaged

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in digging the foundation for the new porch touched his hat and called Mrs. Hayes by name. She stopped to talk to him and betrayed a knowledge of his family affairs which astonished Gloria. After they had passed, the girl questioned her about the workman and how she came to know him.

“His wife came to the mission for help last winter when he was sick,” Mrs. Hayes explained.

Gloria looked at the man in the trench, bending his back in pain that she might have a place to serve tea in the afternoon and loll in a swinging seat in the moonlight. He was but a unit out of those teeming millions of units to whose very existence she had always been indifferent. Had she been told in other days that this man's family had almost died of want she would have let it stay in her mind no longer than the news that a hundred poor girls had been burned to death in a fire trap a bribed factory inspector had branded as safe. In other words, she would not have considered the matter at all. To have dominion over palm and

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pine to Gloria meant only that from these lands should be gathered the best there was for the lords of the earth. And of that order she knew herself to be one.

Sin and suffering were familiar to her in the abstract, sodden wretches she had seen invade even Fifth Avenue, but that back of all were stories of weaknesses, misfortunes, oppression, inhuman exploitation, and man's inhumanity to man she had not considered. She believed they were born into their caste just as she was born into hers.

Now as she listened to this workman talk, heard his story from Mrs. Hayes, learned that he had little children dependent upon him just as she had been dependent upon her father before he had made a settlement upon her, making her independent, Gloria began to realize that there was such a thing as the fellowship of man. She was not uncharitable. Whenever any appeal had been made to her she had always emptied her pocketbook thoughtlessly and considered her duty done. Now the thought of personal service came to her. She

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was ignorant of what she could do, even of its power to bring her any measure of happiness, but it was worth trying.

They had driven in silence almost to town before Gloria turned to Mrs. Hayes and said:

“Mrs. Hayes, the next time you go to the mission I want you to take me.”

Several days later Gloria went with Mrs. Hayes to view at close range the work being done in the poorer quarters of Belmont by the Presbyterian Mission. She met Mrs. Wallace, the matron, and from her learned the story of the humble but unfortunate toilers, and the evils to which they were constantly a prey through their ignorance and inability to protect themselves. Gloria then accompanied her on a round of visits, and soon the girl's interest was such that on the days Mrs. Hayes went to the mission she was glad to go with her.

The boss was disturbed at his daughter's trips into the lowest quarters of Belmont.

“This ain't no kind o' play, girl,” he complained. “Why don't you stick to society?”



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“Society!” she replied with fine scorn.  
“Why does n’t society stick to me!”

“What ’s the matter?”

He had been quick to catch the note of unhappiness. His daughter had not meant to say anything, but the words had slipped out before she could think. She now tried to erase the impression by saying:

“Matter? Nothing. Why?”

The boss’s suspicions were not to be so lulled.

“You ’re keepin’ somethin’ back from me, Gloria. What is it?”

“No, I ’m not,” she insisted.

“Has any one done anythin’ or said anythin’ to you?”

“Nothing.”

“But somethin ’s back o’ all this. You ain’t happy. Any body can see that. Now what ’s it all about?” He waited for her to reply, but she would not speak. “Can’t you answer?”

Forced into a corner, unable to turn the conversation, Gloria saw no way of escape, and finally stammered:

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"It 's—it 's—well—it 's just an atmosphere."

"You go every place."

"To all the big things, yes."

"People are nice to you."

She hesitated, but finally said, "Ye-es."

"Ain't they?"

"Oh, I suppose so," she admitted in a lifeless manner. "Perhaps I 'm not used to western ways, yet the nice people look just like nice people look back East."

"What 's different then?"

"They seem to keep me at arm's length. I don't see why. You're the biggest man in Belmont, and yet I—" She did not finish the sentence.

"Yet—I—what?" he urged.

"I don't understand, that 's all."

"Who, for instance?"

Gloria thought for a moment, and resolved only to name persons in a general way.

"Well, Letty Loomis."

"Old John Loomis's daughter?"

"Is he the big wholesale grocer?"

## OF DAVID KERR

“That ’s him. What ’d she do?”

“I tell you—she did n’t do anything. It ’s just—an atmosphere.”

“Huh! A beautiful lot o’ airs she ’s got a right to put on,” snorted the boss. “D’ you know how old Loomis made his money?”

“Out of groceries, did n’t he?”

“Groceries, nothin’. That ’s just a stall. He ’s got a warehouse chuck full of rotten whisky he sells in prohibition Kansas. That ’s his real business. He don’t sell enough groceries in a year to feed a first class boardin’ house. I would n’t let him sell anything to the poor farm. Don’t let that girl o’ his put it over you any. And they say he passes the plate in church! Gad, I hate a hypocrite. I ’ll make him sweat for it.”

Her father was so wrought up that Gloria was afraid to speak further, but when he insisted she told of several instances of which she had been pleased to term antagonistic atmosphere, and in each case Kerr related some disgraceful characteristic of the head of the family. Once he did not hesitate to give his

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opinion of a society woman whose history he knew well. This intimate knowledge of Belmont affairs and his belittling references to leading citizens made Gloria reach the conclusion that in some way he was in a class by himself. This caused her to soothe him with the remark:

“Father, I think they’re jealous because you’re head and shoulders above them all.”

She might not love him, but her pride in him and her loyalty to him were all the greater for the lack of love. She felt that she was at fault for not having that true filial regard which other daughters had for their fathers, and therefore whenever she could she strengthened her faith in him as Belmont’s leading citizen. She was proud to be his daughter.

## CHAPTER XI

ON the day of his interview with Mc-Minty Kerr had asked Kendall and Dr. Hayes to meet him at Judge Gilbert's office directly after luncheon. At this conference he intended to tell them they would have to acquire the *News*. The transfer of the property need not be made until after the election, but he wanted to know at once that it was his.

The boss was late, and the three men had to wait some time for him.

"I would n't want the boys to know it," said Gilbert disconsolately, "but I'm afraid he's got us beat."

Kendall was hopeful still.

"It's three days till election," he urged. "Anything can happen in that time."

"I wish I believed in miracles like you do," was Dr. Hayes's rueful comment.

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"Only a miracle can save us," added Judge Gilbert gloomily.

"I tell you, gentlemen," insisted Kendall, "I still think Dave Kerr can swing it."

"All the same," answered the coroner, "when I went out to stick my good money in real estate options on factory sites I wish I'd been riding Balaam's ass."

The others' laugh at his expense was cut short by the entrance of David Kerr.

"How 's it look, Mr. Kerr?" asked Gilbert.

"It might be worse," was the reply. "We count the votes, don't we?"

Gilbert was not optimistic.

"I'm afraid it is n't going to be that close."

"Have you heard anything from the eleventh?" queried Kendall.

"I had a talk with Sweeney this morning, and he said he could put enough stock-yards people in the 'leventh to deliver the ward all right. Bauernschmidt was in my office at the same time. He's up against it in the sixth."

"Then we can't count on much outside the river wards," said Kendall.

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Kerr nodded his head. He could have added that the river ward men would vote early and often, but that there was no occasion for it. It was an open secret that for several weeks floaters had been colonized in the levee district.

“We can’t count on much besides them wards,” explained Kerr, “unless the *Belmont News* goes out of business.”

“What can we do about it?” inquired Hayes. He saw defeat staring them in the face.

“Sam,” replied the boss after a moment’s silence, “every man’s got his price—in some form or other.”

“*News* or no *News*, we’ve got to win,” exclaimed Kendall desperately. “I’ve staked everything on it in Chicago and I must get results—and that means a franchise and nothing but a franchise.”

“Then we’ve got to have that paper at any cost.”

“It’s mortgaged for all it’s worth,” said Gilbert.

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“That won’t help us in the next three days,” snapped Kendall.

“There ain’t no use mincing matters,” concluded the boss. “We’re up against it. There’s only one thing to do; see what he’ll sell for, and pay him his price.”

Judge Gilbert looked at the matter from the point of view of a business lawyer.

“It won’t be cash down for the whole thing. We merely assume the mortgage, and then pay him whatever he’ll take to clear out.”

Kerr had figured all this out. With him time was the most important consideration.

“We’ve got to get busy mighty quick,” said the boss.

“When are you going to see him?” asked Kendall.

“Right away.”

“We can’t very well go to his office,” said Gilbert. “Even that little move would give him more of an advantage.”

“Get him over here,” ordered Kerr. “Telephone him. He’ll come. You needn’t say who’s here.”



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Judge Gilbert picked up the telephone on the table and asked Williams, his secretary, who sat in the outer office, to get Mr. Wright at the Belmont *News* on the line for him.

Judge Gilbert's offices consisted of an outer room where sat his secretary; within, where Kerr and his lieutenants were in conference, was the library, a large room looking out on the main thoroughfare of Belmont; and from this, opposite the outer reception room, there opened two smaller rooms, one of which Gilbert used as his private office, the other as a room for consultations.

When Gilbert finished telephoning, he said, "He 's busy going over the proofs of some late stuff for this afternoon's paper, but he 'll be over in half an hour or so."

## CHAPTER XII

**W**HEN Gloria found that the Presbyterian Mission was in need of money in order to extend its work, she suggested to Mrs. Hayes that they go among their friends, explain the situation and ask money for their charity. One of the first upon whom they called was Judge Gilbert. Williams explained that the judge was busy for a few minutes and asked them to be seated. He did not know if the men cared to be bothered with mere women on such a day.

When Williams announced that Miss Kerr and Mrs. Hayes wished to see him, Judge Gilbert asked Kerr if he knew the meaning of the visit.

“They got some sort o’ mission work they ’re beggin’ for. It’s just a polite shake down.”

“I did n’t know she had taken it up that seri-

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ously. I just thought she went down with Mrs. Hayes out of curiosity.”

“Women is queer creatures, Amos. Gloria’s spendin’ lots of her time with Sam’s wife savin’ souls. You’re in for it. She got me to subscribe a hundred dollars. Wanted my name to head the list. I told her to put me down as Cheerful Giver. Said I was castin’ bread on the water without any hope o’ gittin’ it back. Them mission things is usually fakes.”

The boss’s further opinion concerning settlement work was not voiced because, while Kerr was talking, Judge Gilbert had telephoned Williams to usher Mrs. Hayes and Miss Kerr into the library.

Followed by the other men, Gilbert advanced to meet them, and after the usual greetings had been exchanged, offered them chairs.

“You must pardon us,” began Mrs. Hayes. “We did not expect to find you so busy. To tell the truth, we did n’t expect to find two persons here whom we have already visited.” She looked at Kerr and her husband.

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"I'm the Cheerful Giver," said Kerr with a humorous grimace which pretended to show that the donation was not so cheerfully parted with.

"I'm not so cheerful, but I was a giver," added Dr. Hayes.

"I told Judge Gilbert to lock the safe, that I knew you would be after money," Kerr continued.

"Highway robbers, I call them," was Dr. Hayes's testimony this time.

"A bad reputation they've given us, Judge Gilbert," laughed Gloria, "and we don't deserve it, indeed we don't."

Kerr walked into the private office and Gilbert, catching his eye, followed him. The boss said something; Gilbert looked at the women and then nodded his head in assent. Dr. Hayes, also catching the boss's eye, strolled away from the group casually as the judge rejoined it. A word with him was all that Kerr required. The master of Locust Lawn was setting the stage with an eye that overlooked no detail. There was too much at stake for him

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to neglect to interpolate anything effective which chance might throw in his way.

As the two men walked back into the library, Mrs. Hayes was saying:

“Dr. Hayes and I have had quite an argument, and here are the lawyers, Gloria, who can settle the question for us. Can a woman steal from her husband, Mr. Kendall?”

Kendall knitted his brows in perplexity. “Really, Mrs. Hayes, that is a question I shall have to take under advisement.”

“But a man can steal from his wife,” Gloria put in. There was a general laugh at this which she did not relish. “I ’m talking seriously. If it were n’t so, we might n’t be here begging money.”

“So you are after money,” said Judge Gilbert lightly. “Then you must tell me why I should contribute to keep men from stealing from their wives, you who have no one to steal from you.”

Gloria was not to be diverted from what she had to say. These men to whom she was talking represented to her what was best in Bel-

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mont, what was best in manhood. She wished them to see the truth as she saw it.

“It is n’t that kind of stealing,” she went on; “it’s worse than that. Till I went with Mrs. Hayes to visit the mission I had no idea of the degradation and misery in a town even like Belmont. When I say men steal from their wives I mean they take the money they should spend on their families and spend it for whisky and gambling.

“I think it’s a shame that such men as you, Judge Gilbert, and you, Dr. Hayes, and you, Father, of all persons, permit such things to happen here in Belmont. I wish I were a man!”

“You can’t keep people from spending their money,” said Kerr, as he looked at his watch.

Dr. Hayes caught the slight nod the boss gave, and said something to his wife. Then, interrupting the discussion, he said to Gloria:

“I’m already on the list of cheerful givers, Miss Kerr, and I’m going to ask if you’ll let me carry off Mrs. Hayes for half an hour or so.”

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“But I ’m only assisting her,” she replied in surprise.

“You can tell Judge Gilbert about it even better than she can. I know how it is when married ladies come to my office and when unmarried ladies come.”

“Yes,” laughed his wife, “he keeps me poor, contributing to things that are none of our business just because pretty girls come in and he can’t refuse them. Dr. Hayes says we won’t be long, Gloria. You don’t mind, do you?”

“Of course not. Where shall I meet you?”

“We ’ll come back here.”

Gloria turned from saying good-by to Mrs. Hayes to find only her father in the room with her. Kendall and Judge Gilbert had withdrawn to the latter’s private office.

“Where ’s Joe Wright been keepin’ himself?” asked Kerr suddenly.

The girl did not betray the slightest interest in the question. She took her time about answering, and when she spoke it was in the most nonchalant manner.

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“Mr. Wright? Oh, he ’s in Belmont.”

“You don’t go with him like you used to. He ain’t been to Locust Lawn once.”

“He says he ’s busy when I see him. I meet him occasionally.”

“I thought you and him was good friends.”

“Oh, we are.”

Although she answered his questions in an off-hand manner, her father was not deceived. From what he had been told and also from what he had observed, he felt that his daughter had a genuine regard for the owner of the Belmont *News*. Of its depth he could not decide.

“He ain’t been near you for a long time.”

“I ’m not bothering about him. I ’m not bothering particularly about any one.”

The girl was glad that at this moment Judge Gilbert came from his private office. Her father was questioning her about matters she preferred to keep to herself.

“If Miss Gloria can spare you, Mr. Kerr,” said the judge, “Mr. Kendall would like to see you in my office. I ’ve come back to be



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persuaded that I ought to join the cheerful givers.”

“I ’ll tell Kendall, Gloria, that he ’s got to join the lodge,” were Kerr’s parting words as he went into the inner office.

Remembering that Miss Kerr had not been given the chance to explain her visit fully, Judge Gilbert took a chair beside her and said:

“Now I ’m at your service, prepared to believe the most terrible things about our fair Belmont.”

“When you talk like that, Judge Gilbert, I ’m afraid you ’re laughing at me.”

Of late Gloria’s seriousness had far outweighed her old mood of joyousness, and she now insisted on being taken seriously.

“You ’ve lectured me so for being shocked at what I ’ve found that I ’m afraid to say any more.”

Judge Gilbert was seeking in his mind for some plausible reason to advance which would be sufficient to remove Gloria from the work she had undertaken, when Williams entered.

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"I beg your pardon, sir," said the secretary, "but Mr. Wright is here."

"Mr. Wright!" exclaimed Gloria. She almost rose from her seat, but feeling the eyes of the lawyer upon her, sank back again and tried to appear quite at her ease.

"Tell him I'll see him in a minute."

"Yes, sir."

Williams went out, and left Gloria feeling as if she were on the stand, a witness in her own defense. She was provoked because she knew the attorney had heard her exclamation. Something within her made her wish to rush away. But this wish in an instant gave place to one more ardent. She would see him, speak to him, learn the truth from his own lips if he were man enough to speak, and then go away forever. Deep down in her heart, however, she heard a whisper out of the leaves of their "birthday book," words he had whispered:

Spring in the hills, Beloved,  
On the side of a meadowed slope;  
And Love in our hearts, Beloved,  
Love and Spring and Hope.

## CHAPTER XIII

**W**RIGHT had no means of knowing what it was Judge Gilbert had to propose to him, but he felt certain that it had some connection with his newspaper and with the campaign now ending in a lurid blaze of political pyrotechnics. Gloria Kerr was the last person he would have thought of meeting in Gilbert's office. He had promised himself that after the election, no matter whether it went his way or not, he would see her and make his excuses for not having had the time to be with her as he had wished. He would also begin to look about for a purchaser for the *News*. He hoped he would have no difficulty in getting Gloria to leave Belmont. Then for the new life with her where they could be ever together, one in heart and hope and happiness.

When Williams told Wright that Judge Gil-

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bert was ready to see him, he opened the door and saw the lawyer advancing to meet him with extended hand. The adviser of Belmont corporations knew the value of a hand-shake and a cordial greeting. It made a visit to his office take on the air of a social affair.

"I'm so glad you came," he said to the editor, shaking hands heartily.

"I came as soon as I could." Wright was not going to be outdone, and therefore used his most genial tone, although the shaking hands on his side was a perfunctory performance. He knew Judge Gilbert's real attitude, and undue cordiality under the circumstances savored too much of the Greeks bearing gifts.

"Miss Kerr and I have just been speaking of you."

"What!" exclaimed Wright. Looking past the judge, for the first time he saw Gloria. At mention of her name the girl rose from her chair. She really thought she merely wanted to speak to him, once more look into his eyes, and then take her departure.

At sight of her, Wright stepped forward

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and said, "How do you do, Miss Kerr? It's a great pleasure to see you. I certainly did not expect to find you here."

They shook hands in rather a constrained manner, Gilbert watching them closely the while.

"Naturally not," she replied. "I came to see Judge Gilbert on a matter of business and am just leaving." Despite herself she could not help adding, "My friends find me most of the time at Locust Lawn."

Something in her manner brought the lawyer at once into the conversation with a turning of the subject.

"I couldn't tell you very well over the 'phone what I wanted," he explained to Wright. "It'll be a little while before I can talk to you. I need a few minutes more to ascertain fully the wishes of my clients."

The conversation was so business-like that Gloria forced herself to say:

"I must be going. Please don't let me keep you from your work."

But at this Gilbert held up his hand appeal-

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ingly and begged, "Please don't go. I want you to do me a favor. Wait for Mrs. Hayes. Until I've finished this conference, won't you be so good as to act as hostess here and entertain Mr. Wright?"

"Really, Judge Gilbert, I—"

"I'm sure Mr. Wright wishes it." He interrupted her because he did not know what she might say, and he knew his remark would bring from the newspaper man a request that she remain.

"I would n't have Miss Kerr make a martyr of herself," Wright said with quiet dignity, "but if she would be so kind—"

"Did n't I tell you," the judge said to the girl. "Not a word. You must take my place until I return. If you'll pardon me, I'll be with you again in just a few minutes."

There was no time for them to protest. He slipped into the office where Kendall and Kerr were closeted, and closed the door quietly after him.

The situation was not without its embarrassment. Taking into consideration everything

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which had happened in the last month, there was little wonder that each felt constrained. In addition to that, Gloria felt as if she had just been figuratively thrown at his head. To a high-spirited girl this in itself was mortifying. They sat without a word until the silence became painful. Wright was desperate. Here was the one woman in all the world, and he was afraid to open his mouth. At last he mustered sufficient courage to remark:

“Beautiful spring weather we ’re having.”

This remark served only to punctuate the silence. It seemed to him, from the length of time before she replied, that Gloria was mentally inspecting the records of the weather bureau for the last twenty years.

“Yes,” she said, a word that did not appear so ponderous as to require all that time to bringing it forth.

This did not prove conducive to further conversation. He felt that the weather had not been exhausted by her voluble reply, however, and used it again.

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“They tell me it’s liable to be bad for another month.”

Again Gloria seemed to make a mental survey of all the weather records of the last twenty years. Wright had almost forgotten what he had said when she at last gave the conversational football a dainty kick by saying:

“Yes.”

This time he was ready for her. His embarrassment was wearing off and he began again promptly:

“Don’t the rains make the road pretty bad out your way?”

“My friends manage to get out to see me.”

This was a chill rejoinder, and Wright felt he had lost several points in their game of indirection.

“Locust Lawn is quite a distance out,” he ventured.

“Not far enough to discourage my friends.”

This goaded him to an apology. He regretted that she was not making it easy for him, but he forgave her because he knew she did not understand.



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“Because I’ve been so busy, please don’t think that I’m discouraged.”

“Why should I think of it at all?” she replied with spirit.

Her remark hurt him, both her words and her manner of speech. It tore away his reserve and made him burst forth in protest.

“That’s not like you, Gloria. We’ve been such good friends.”

“We have been good friends,” she admitted promptly. “Is there any reason, Joe, why we should not be now?”

His heart beat high within him at her words. They were so direct, so honest, so like the one woman of his dreams. It grieved him that he could not be as direct with her; but that was impossible, for over them was the sinister shadow of David Kerr, her father, the boss of Belmont.

“There’s no reason why we shouldn’t be good friends, Gloria. What put that idea into your head?”

“My circle of friends in Belmont seems to have grown smaller and smaller.”

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“Please don’t put me on the outside.”

“You seem to have put yourself there.”

The conversation lagged. There was so much to think about. Gloria was seeking to reconcile his explanations with her own observations. Looking at him closely she saw that he did not have that fresh, robust look which a month ago had made him seem fit for a gladiatorial contest. As he sat in the big office chair he seemed to relax with fatigue. His face was thinner, and there were little lines of worry about his eyes. Between his brows and on either side his mouth were to be seen creases which the girl thought proclaimed to the world his strength of character. A month ago she had not noticed them. She had felt he was such a man, but the wrinkles, confirming her belief, could almost be called a source of joy to her. They had made away with some of the youthfulness, but in his face she now saw something which more than compensated. It had greater strength now, strength such as was written on her father’s countenance.

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“You look tired.” Her low, sympathetic tones and her solicitous look did what nothing else could do. They melted his stern purpose to bear it all in silence for yet a few days into a desire to take her as much as he dared into his confidence. With a woman’s quick perception she would understand that he was unhappy. Her sympathy and her confidence in him would nerve him to fight the good fight as nothing else could and his heart was stirred by the possibility.

“Yes,” he admitted, “I ’m tired and sick at heart.”

“Why don’t you take a vacation? Go to Europe.”

“I can’t pick up and run away like that; but I ’d do it anyway if it would bring back the dear old days.”

“The days I knew?” the girl made bold to ask.

“The days you made so—delightful.”

“Can they be gone forever?”

“You mean—” Wright did not dare to put his hope in words.

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Carried farther than she had intended, Gloria beat a retreat by saying:

“Who knows? We may meet in Paris again some day.”

“Some time soon, I hope. I’m sick and tired of it all here, Gloria. Today it has seemed like the game is n’t worth the candle. What do you think?”

“I’m all in the dark, too,” was her confession. Slowly and surely in the shadow of her shattered hopes and his unhappy conflict of duty and desire were they being drawn closer together than ever they had been when they laughed with the spring and dreamed of the days to come in a radiant sunshine of unwhispered love.

“I don’t know what to think,” Gloria went on in a low tone. “I don’t seem to understand Belmont.”

“Why don’t you go away? Don’t you want to?”

“What for? I know the life out there.” She made a sweeping gesture which seemed to encompass all the world outside the four walls

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which shut them in together. "It would n't really satisfy me any more—to live as I used to live."

"Yet your life here—" He left the rest to her.

"No, this does n't satisfy me either."

"In a word, Gloria, you 're not happy."

Instead of replying directly, she asked with a dropping of her hands to her sides in a hopeless fashion:

"Is anybody in the whole world happy? Are you happy?"

"Don't you think I am?"

"I 'm afraid not."

The appealing way she looked at him, her whole soul welling up in her eyes, brought him to his feet and set him to pacing nervously up and down. He looked fatigued, distressed, beside himself with care. She forgave him everything but his studied refusal to let her share whatever weighed upon him. Could he not see, she thought, how she yearned to tell him that whither he went there she would go also, that his joys would be all her joys and that his

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burdens would be divided with her, that love divided all sorrow and doubled all joy.

Wright could stand it no longer. He saw her before him, trembling with that same emotion that shook him, aflame with the same fire that burned within him, mutely questioning him with her big, soulful eyes. How could he make amends for that month of neglect except by telling her what she long ago had guessed, but what more recently she had a right to doubt? He felt weak where he wanted to be strong. To hear from her lips that she loved him was all that he needed to make him invincible. With her acknowledged love in his heart there was nothing he could not do.

“Oh, Gloria, I can’t tell you what a fight I ’m making. You would n’t understand. Business is business, outside a woman’s realm, but I ’ve missed you so much this last month.”

At this declaration she caught her breath. Joy, she found, could sometimes prove the twin of pain. That this man, this strong, fearless man, in his struggles had missed her, had intimated a longing for dependence upon her,

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made her heart bound. Love, even when his banners have been flung forth to the breeze leagues before the castle wall is reached, never ceases to be a surprise when at last the knock at the gate is heard.

“You ’ve no right to say your work is outside of woman’s realm if you ’ve—if you ’ve missed something a woman could supply.”

“Something the one woman could supply,” he corrected.

“I must be going,” she said, rising from her chair; “I ’m afraid Mrs. Hayes is n’t coming.”

He stepped between her and the door, letting her take several steps forward, because they brought her closer to him, before he said:

“No, Gloria, you must hear me. I did n’t mean to speak now, of all times, but it had to be some day, and perhaps it is all for the best now.”

The woman leaned her hand upon the table for support, turning half away from him.

“Don’t Joe, please don’t,” she murmured. “I must go.”

“No, no, I must tell you. You ’ve asked

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me if you could help me. I want you to help me; you can help me always. I love you. I want you to be my wife. I have loved you, oh, so long; and, most of all, I've felt that you have needed me. Don't tell me that it was just selfishness, dear, that made me feel that my protecting arms should be about you always. Love is love, a law unto itself alone. We must recognize it and bow to it, because it brings us happiness."

He came a step nearer, but she did not turn to him. She stood half turned away, her eyes downcast, her lips parted into half a smile. Her breath came fast and she could feel her heart beat. Then she heard him say in a lower tone, so gently:

"Nothing to say, Gloria? Can't you believe in me?"

She turned to find herself gazing into his eyes.

"Yes, I believe in you—as I believe in my father."

This answer was not enough. He had





“Gloria, tell me that you love me”



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asked her to be his wife. Not yet had she replied.

“Say that you care for me, Gloria; tell me that you love me.”

“I ’ve always cared, Joe; I do love you.”

“For better or worse?” He held out his arms.

“To the end of the world,” she whispered as his arms were folded about her.

And as their lips met in their first kiss, Wright saw in her eyes the light that never yet has shone on land or sea.

## CHAPTER XIV

**E**VEN as Wright held Gloria in his arms there came back to him her words:  
“Yes, I believe in you—as I believe in my father.”

They were like lead about his heart, and cautioned him that he must get her away from Belmont as quickly as possible. Words of love must be postponed, new-found bliss be treated as commonplace, until he had finished his hard task of persuading her to go away.

“You ’ve made me supremely happy, Gloria. I want you to believe in me and trust me—always.”

She smiled up at him her love and confidence as she answered, “I do, I do.”

“I want you to be happy, and I know you ’re not happy in Belmont. You must go away at once. I ’ll follow you.”

“But why?” she questioned. The smile was

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still there, but surprise peeped forth from her eyes. "I'm happy now."

Wright laughed at her with that delightfully patronizing air of possession that lovers assume, caught her in his arms once more and kissed her.

"I know, dear, but you'll be happier. I can't explain. You wouldn't understand. Can't you trust me?"

"Ye-es, but father would—"

"He won't oppose your going, I know he won't." At thought of David Kerr and the fierce fight they were waging Wright became insistent. "Do this for me, Gloria. You can get a late train for St. Louis tonight. I'll have Mrs. Gilbert go with you. Next week I'll join you, and we'll make plans for the wedding."

"But, Joe, that's so foolish," she complained. "I like Belmont immensely now." Then she struck a more serious note. "Besides, it wouldn't be fair to father. He's put me through, and I'm not going to disappoint him. To go away—well, I feel it would be disloyal."

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“You can write him we’re engaged,” he pleaded. “Then I’ll go to see him.”

Gloria could not altogether understand his insistence. Then, too, to send her away just after they had found each other was something she could not explain to her father.

Further discussion was put out of the question by the appearance of Judge Gilbert.

“Would you object to waiting for Mrs. Hayes in this office?” he asked, pointing to the room next to that in which the men had been conferring. He smiled as he added, “Mr. Wright came on business, you know.”

“I think he transacted it with me, Judge Gilbert,” she could not help replying. Then she asked Wright with a smile, “You won’t be long?”

He walked with her to the door, to Gilbert’s surprise, crossed the threshold and went into the little office. Somehow or other—such things are always mysteries, certainly they are accidents—the door seemed to close of its own accord.

“Wait for me a little while,” he said, taking

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both her hands in his. "It's going to be such a glorious world for us. I never knew what happiness meant till now. To be wherever you were has always made life sweet, but now everything takes on a new meaning transmuted by the glory of being loved by you."

She loosed one hand from his grasp and put it over his mouth.

"Naughty boy, you must go back to work. You're playing truant here. I mustn't listen to you. When I listen to you, you make me forget everything but that I love you. And now I want to be alone and think."

To leave her for an instant was like having his life's sun in eclipse. At last she freed herself from his arms and bade him go. He had gone as far as the door, his hand upon the knob, when she quickly crossed the small space between them, threw her arms around his neck and whispered:

"Remember, dear, in whatever you do, I'm with you. May my love and my confidence support you ever."

It seemed to him like a benediction. Again

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were his arms around her, again their lips pledged their hearts' lasting love. Gently he released himself from her embrace, and with a parting smile was gone.

Wright stepped into the library, his eyes upon Gloria until the closed door shut her from his sight. He turned to find himself face to face with David Kerr.

While Wright had been talking to Gloria, Kerr and Kendall had joined the attorney in the library. As soon as the editor saw with whom he had to deal, he recognized how hard pressed were his friends the enemy, since no go-between was employed. He was being asked to treat with the boss of Belmont himself.

"You know Mr. Kendall and Mr. Kerr," Gilbert said, without resorting to his social manner, as was his custom. This he knew to be a case of diamond cut diamond, and there was no occasion for any seeming show of friendliness.

"I had the pleasure of meeting them at your house."



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It was easy to see from the direct opening of the conversation that there was to be little beating around the bush. Gilbert took a chair at the head of the long library table. Wright sat to his left, where he could see the door of the room in which Gloria waited for him. Opposite to him were Kerr and Kendall.

“It’s been a hot campaign,” were the boss’s first words, “but we can afford to let bygones be bygones.”

Wright was not to be led into any admission which might be used against him later, and therefore would not assent to this.

“What I can afford has nothing to do with it. The one question is: Can Belmont afford to give itself up to this terminal trust that leaves no stone unturned in its effort to steal the streets and parks of the town? That is only the first step. Where do you propose it shall end?”

“That’s where you misrepresent our side, Mr. Wright,” said Kendall. “The undertaking you speak of is perfectly legitimate, for the direct benefit of Belmont. I challenge you

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to prove that what you have accused us of being about to do is really the intention of this company. Nothing, sir, is farther from it."

"That 's all been gone over," Wright said, turning to the lawyer at the head of the table. "There 's nothing new to be said along that line. Was it for this you sent for me, Judge Gilbert?"

"No. I asked you to come over here to consider an offer for your paper. Is the *News* for sale?"

"That depends. 'For sale' when applied to a newspaper may sometimes have an ugly meaning."

"Of course," Gilbert was quick to add, "I mean as a newspaper property."

"I 'm a poor man, Judge Gilbert," Wright began slowly. "I could n't refuse to consider an offer—"

He got no further, for Kendall exclaimed:

"That 's what I thought."

"Wait a minute," Wright asked him, lifting his hand in warning that he had not finished. "You interrupted me before I was through."

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What I say is this: I could n't refuse to consider an offer from a proper quarter."

"What does the source matter to you?" Kendall inquired. "You're human. You want money as bad as any of us."

Before replying, Wright's gaze rested for an instant on the door behind which his heart's happiness waited. Her words came to him, strengthening him to meet the tempter: "Remember, dear, in whatever you do, I'm with you. May my love and my confidence support you ever."

"I may want money—need it—worse than any of you," he confessed. "But it must come only one way—honestly."

"Nothin' dishonest 'bout sellin' a paper, is there?" growled Kerr.

"I can't tell in this case until I hear what Judge Gilbert's offer is."

"It's simply this: I have some clients who wish to purchase your paper."

"Mr. Kerr and Mr. Kendall, I suppose."

"Does it make any difference to you?"

"It may to Belmont."

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“What’s Belmont got to do with it?” asked Kerr.

“A newspaper can’t change hands like a stock of groceries,” Wright retorted impatiently.

“You know I want to be open and above board with you, Mr. Wright,” soothed Gilbert. “So I’ll tell you that Mr. Kendall and Mr. Kerr are interested in this offer. I know the paper’s mortgaged. What’ll you sell for, the purchasers to assume the mortgage and all other debts, and possession to be given this afternoon?”

Wright merely looked at him and shook his head. What he thought he almost hated to say. It hurt him to think that they could believe he would even listen to such a proposition.

“Then,” continued Gilbert, “another basis on which to deal would give you nominal control until after the election, but my clients would not expect the paper to be so vehement in its denunciations in the next few days.”

“Judge Gilbert,” the editor replied quietly,

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but with great earnestness, "that's an offer I don't thank you for. These men haven't enough money to buy my paper."

"You bought the paper," snarled Kerr in an ugly manner.

"Yes," came the answer right back at him, "but you want to buy my self-respect."

The two men glared at each other, but the boss did not deny the assertion. The elder man was beginning to rage inwardly. So accustomed had he become to the exercise of autocratic power in Belmont that he could not reconcile himself to being thwarted, especially when success was so vital to him.

"There's a good profit in it for you," was the conciliatory remark of Judge Gilbert.

"In dollars and cents, perhaps," admitted Wright, "but there are some things that have a greater value than mere money; peace of mind, for instance, and the deserved respect of the community, and honor. I can't sell out the people who are depending on me, the people of Belmont."

The men across the table looked at him as if

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they thought him crazy. They knew he had foolish ideas, but they had not dreamed he would let such an opportunity slip through his fingers. He was the owner of a newspaper that was losing money every day, and they had as much as asked him to name his own figure for his property. They could not understand how honor was part of the transaction in the sale of a newspaper, even in the last days of a strong fight against the organization. What should he care about the respect of the community when he had money enough to take him out of that community and keep him comfortable until he was ready to get another paper somewhere else to exploit his insane ideas of civic righteousness?

“You are just a little hasty in your judgment, Mr. Wright,” Judge Gilbert said, when he saw that the publisher seemed to regard his answer as final. “If you ’ll consider the matter carefully I think it ’ll appear to you in this light: Here ’s a paper that is n’t making expenses. A good offer is made you which if you are wise enough to accept will permit you to

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leave Belmont far richer than when you came. There are other lances to be broken elsewhere. Why tilt here against a stone wall?"

"If it were a stone wall there'd have been no offer." Wright was shrewd enough to know that they must be in desperate straits.

"See here, young man," Kerr blazed, "you won't be able to make a go of it. If you don't sell now I'll see to it that some day the sheriff will."

This direct threat was more than he could bear. Rising from his chair and leaning across the table the publisher shook his fist in Kerr's face and told him just what he thought of the situation. Remembering who was on the other side of the door he was facing, he did not raise his voice, but into his low tones he put all the fire of his honest indignation.

"You may put me down and out, as you boast you can, but you can't buy me out. You've scared advertisers so they're afraid to use my paper, you've had me sued for libel, you've raised my taxes, you've made the railroads hold up my white paper, you've annoyed me in a

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thousand petty ways, but I'm getting out a paper every day, and I'm telling the truth. That's what hurts," he hurled across the table. "I'm telling the truth. You can't stand it.

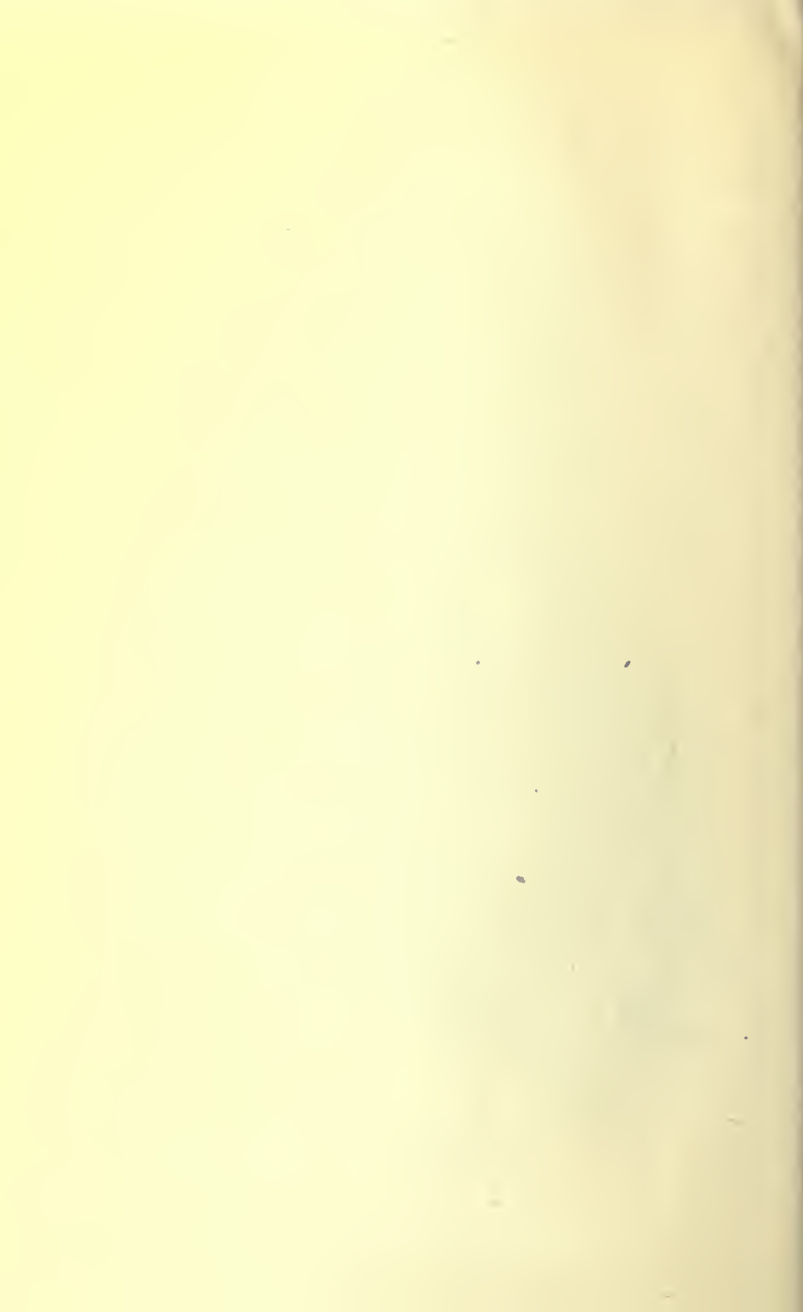
"God knows Belmont needs somebody to tell the truth! If you took my paper today, who'd stand between the people of Belmont and the wolves? The town's being robbed blind. I'm telling about it, and I believe there are enough honest people to see me through and set the town right. But they need a leader—a newspaper—and I won't sell 'em out.

"For what's coming," he announced sternly, "hold yourself responsible, not me. You forced me to come out with the bald truth of the matter. Maybe you know and maybe you don't know that you of all men are the one I would least care to hold up for the public to see. Today—for the first time—I printed my name at the head of my editorial page. I want people to know that back of the paper's a man—a man that won't sell out, and back of the man I'm going to have the people. Do you hear? Belmont's going to be a clean city."





“Licked! Licked! I’ve just begun to fight”



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He leaned across the table and looked the boss straight in the eye, emphasizing his last words by bringing his fist down on the table with each telling point he drove home. It was a duel between him and Kerr; the others merely looked on. Never in all the days of his political activity had a man talked in this fashion to David Kerr. The audacity and fearlessness of the young man aroused his admiration. He did not let that feeling interfere, however, with his intention to destroy him utterly. The Belmont *News* must be muzzled, and the boss could not permit a matter of sentiment to outweigh a political necessity.

“You ’d better go slow, young man,” cautioned Kerr. “I ain’t played my hand, you know. You’ve put up a good fight; that’s why I ’m giving you a good chance to git out without admitting you’ve been licked.”

“Licked! Licked!” echoed Wright with fine disdain, “I’ve just begun to fight. You’re nearer a worse defeat at this minute than you ever were before in all your life. You’re going down and the people of Belmont are

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going to keep you down if I have anything to do with it. Don't insult me by trying to buy my paper. I've the dearest reason in the world for wanting money and for leaving Belmont—but if I go without a dollar I can still hold up my head and look every man in the eye."

Kerr now looked at him without visible show of anger, in that cold, calculating manner he had taught every one to fear.

"Then you won't sell?" he said.

"No," shouted Wright, beside himself with indignation at the offer; "I'll see you in hell first."

What further might have been said there is no telling. The words were scarcely out of Wright's mouth when he saw the door opposite him open and Gloria appear. Instantly he relaxed from his tense, strained manner, and, noting his change, the other men turned to find that David Kerr's daughter was the cause. She stood in the doorway hesitatingly, recognizing that she was interrupting a business meeting.

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“I beg your pardon,” she said, “but from the window I saw Mrs. Hayes on the street, and I thought I ’d go to her.”

“I ’ll join you,” Wright announced. He left his place at the table and walked over to where Gloria was standing.

“I suppose the meeting is over,” ventured Gilbert.

“It is, as far as I ’m concerned,” said the newspaper man. Then, looking at Kerr, he added, “I think I ’ve made my position perfectly clear.”

## CHAPTER XV

**G**LORIA'S announced intention of re-joining Mrs. Hayes was not the only motive that had brought her into the library. The angry hum of voices had been borne to her even through the closed door, and with a woman's impatience and curiosity she was anxious to know what was going on. Greater than all else, however, was her desire to be with Wright. She thought that by appearing she could bring matters to a conclusion and carry off with her the man she loved. Now that she was in the library and Wright had said that he was ready to go whenever she was, David Kerr's daughter forgot about her desire to go to Mrs. Hayes.

Dr. Hayes and his wife were returning to Judge Gilbert's office when Gloria had seen them, and soon Williams ushered them into the library. The presence of the two women pre-

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vented all open discussion of political matters. Even had it not been for Miss Kerr and Mrs. Hayes there could have been no controversy, because after Wright had made his position clear he would not talk farther about it. Now he was merely waiting for Gloria.

"I thought you said you would n't be long," was the way, in a playful attempt at seriousness, Gloria upbraided her sovereign lord when they found themselves a little apart from the others.

"It was n't my fault," was all he could say.

"You have n't told father, have you?"

"No. He was n't in the mood for such a pleasing revelation. I hope you've thought about leaving for St. Louis to-night. It's now imperative that you go."

"I thought about it, dear, but I can't go. What would I say to father?"

Wright was on the point of again urging her to leave Belmont when he heard the faint cries of newsboys far down the street. Nearer and nearer came the boys. Louder and louder were their cries. Street sales in Belmont were

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so small that the little urchins who sold papers to chance customers were never very noisy. An unusual clamor on their part betokened some extraordinary piece of news. Their shouts at last began to attract the attention of others in the room. Kerr, Kendall and Hayes looked at Wright questioningly. Then, as they began to distinguish the cries of one boy in advance of the others, the three men walked hastily to the window and looked out on the street. Every one was rushing for a paper, or else standing with the sheet in his hand staring at the first page with its big black type.

Recovering himself suddenly, Wright tried to talk to Gloria to drown the noise, but it was too late.

"What is that noise? What are they shouting for?" she asked. "Listen." She put her hand on his arm as a signal to say nothing while she tried to hear what the boys were saying.

"Extry! Extry! Get a *News!* All about the grafters! Extry! Read the big steal! Full account o' the railroad grab! Big men and boodlers in combine! Extry! Extry!"



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It was now a flood of sound as the boys came under the window.

“What’s it all about?” the girl asked.

“That’s nothing, only a crowd of newsboys raising a racket. Gloria, listen to me. We must get away from here. Even if you’re happy in Belmont, I’m not. Won’t you do this for me? Let’s get away from this office and talk it over.”

She shook her head, and refused to move.

“Gloria, you must do as I say without question. Just this once, please.”

Both turned at this instant, as did the others, startled by a hubbub in the outer office. Suddenly the door was burst open violently by young Jim Winthrow, the *Banner’s* political reporter. He rushed breathlessly into the room, flourishing a copy of the Belmont *News*. Following him came Williams with a look of amazement on his face as he read the headlines of the copy of the paper he had.

“Judge Gilbert! Judge Gilbert!” gasped the reporter, with eyes for no one else. “Have you seen the *News*? Big story ’bout the belt

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line railway and the 'lection! Gimme the facts so I can show the *News* up."

"Let me see your paper."

"Here it is—with big headlines."

Wright knew better than any one else in the room what was in the paper. What was written there was not for Gloria's eyes to see, nor for her ears to hear.

"You must go, Gloria. Don't stay for this; I'll drive you to Locust Lawn."

He was almost out of the room with her when something the reporter said caused her to stop.

"The *News* says 'Dave Kerr is back of it,'" explained Winthrow, holding up the paper for Judge Gilbert to see, "and that it's the biggest steal in the history of Belmont."

"What's that?" Kerr demanded, coming forward.

"I did n't see you, Mr. Kerr," the reporter apologized, "but here it is on the front page."

"Come, Gloria," Wright pleaded with her.

"I can't go yet."

Beside her stood Williams still engaged in

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reading the flaring headlines of the paper he had brought into the room with him. She seized his paper from him and began to read the startling words.

"It's an infamous lie!" shouted Gilbert, crushing in his hands the paper he had been scanning. "Dr. Hayes, will you please escort Miss Gloria and Mrs. Hayes to their carriage."

"Stop!" commanded Gloria. The hum of indignation sweeping over the room was stilled. All turned to the daughter of David Kerr. "Is this true?"

"What?" asked Gilbert.

"What this paper says?" She held up the paper, her hands trembling. Then she began to read: "If the democrats win, Belmont will surely be sold to the merciless stock-yards terminal trust. The deal, which means millions for the unscrupulous promoters and nothing for Belmont, has been engineered by that king of underhand manipulators, one no less unscrupulous than the very men to whom he would sell his town, David Kerr!"

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There was horror in her tones and she held the paper from her as a thing unclean.

"Is this true?" she demanded imperiously.

"Not a word of it," Judge Gilbert was quick to answer.

"Not you." She turned to David Kerr.

"Father, is it true?"

The boss of Belmont looked like some wounded wild animal brought to bay. He gazed with speechless rage at Joe Wright, and then looked at his daughter. She stood with arm outstretched to him, a mute but eloquent appeal for a denial. The big man shook himself, as if calling forth all his strength for a final effort, and straightened himself to his full height. Looking her squarely in the eye he replied firmly:

"No, Gloria, it ain't true."

The sigh she gave as her arm dropped to her side seemed to be a prayer of thanksgiving that he had come through the ordeal unscathed. She knew he would, but she wanted the words of denial from his own lips. Her

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next order showed every one that she was the daughter of David Kerr.

“Then punish the man who published that lie.”

Wright’s heart seemed to stop beating as he heard the words that had in them all the finality of a funeral bell.

Kerr had his own reasons for wishing to minimize the matter. Joe Wright he would willingly, gladly have sacrificed, but he did not know how it would react on Gloria. He could find means to make the newspaper man suffer without Gloria being cognizant of the fact.

“That’s just Western politics.” The boss tried to pass it off lightly. “Don’t let that bother you.”

“He must be punished, I say.” Her indignation knew no bounds. “Would you let it go unchallenged that I am the daughter of such a man?”

Kerr was aroused by her spirited manner. It would be necessary, he saw, for him to carry it through to the end.

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“Suppose it was Joe Wright?” he asked.

The occasion was too serious for a smile, but in her heart she laughed away the suggestion. She wanted to show her contempt for a man who through a newspaper would utter such lies, and she therefore replied:

“That can’t be. He is n’t that kind of man. But if he did, I would still say—”

“It is Joe Wright,” Kerr roared.

All leaned forward to hear what the girl would say.

“Then I would still say, ‘Punish Joe Wright.’”

From Wright’s lips there burst forth one word:

“Gloria!”

He came a step toward her, and she turned to him with an assuring smile.

“I don’t believe it, Joe.” Again she addressed her father and with fine scorn declared, “It’s a lie. He could n’t do it. You don’t know him as I do.” Turning once more to the man she loved, she said proudly, “Say it’s a lie, Joe.”

## OF DAVID KERR

The two stood gazing at each other, utterly oblivious of everything else in the world. In her eyes there was nothing of doubt. She put into her look all the love and confidence she had promised would always be his. With Wright it was far otherwise. No matter what he said, the fact could not be kept from her. She would investigate. At the top of his editorial page that day were the words, "Owned and edited by Joseph Wright." He had just sworn that he would be the champion of the people of Belmont, and here at his first trial he was quailing under the eyes of the woman he loved. With a wrench he tore himself away from his dear desire to save her from pain and answered huskily:

"You don't understand."

"You!" she cried in an agony of despair as she realized he was confessing.

A single movement of his head showed his assent.

"Oh, you coward!" Her disgust was overpowering. The withering contempt she put into her words was equaled only by her look of

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scorn. He started to speak, but with a gesture of impatience she stopped him.

“All your words are lies, lies, lies! And to think that I promised within this hour to be your wife! You make me hate myself for ever having looked at you. Now I understand why you urged me to leave Belmont.” Again he tried to speak. “Not a word. I’ll not listen to you. Father, take me home.”

She shrank from Wright as if to look at him were dishonor.

All the great love he had for her welled forth in one cry:

“Gloria!”

The girl could not, would not hear. She had but one refuge for her breaking heart. Turning to her father she flung herself into his arms with only a single word: “Father!”

With never a word, with never a look to right or left, the man she had promised to love and who had promised to love her, walked out of the room.

Sobbing as if her heart would break, Gloria rested in her father’s arms.



## CHAPTER XVI

**T**HE unexpected and sensational manner in which the visit of Joe Wright to Judge Gilbert's office was terminated was not without effect upon every one in the room. Pity for Gloria was the dominating emotion, for every one present realized her unhappy position. The dramatic revelation of her love affair, the knowledge that she had been sacrificed, stirred every heart. Mrs. Gilbert and Mrs. Hayes, not well versed in politics, harbored no slight resentment against the publisher of the *News*, since they regarded the article as too severe. Were not their husbands interested on the same side as David Kerr? And they were honest men. But their husbands knew the full measure of the bitter cup that both the boss and his daughter, for the father's misdeeds, were called upon to drain.

The first thing to do was to get Gloria away

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from the office. For several days she had been staying with Mrs. Hayes, and thither she was now taken. By Dr. Hayes's order she was put at once to bed, and under the influence of an opiate, she was soon asleep. Dr. Hayes came downstairs and announced to Kerr, who was savagely pacing back and forth in the drawing-room, that his daughter was suffering from a great nervous shock. He also said that she would probably sleep for several hours.

"It ain't no use for me to stay here then," the boss declared. "If you want me you can git me by telephone at my office or Gilbert's or at the Demmycratic club rooms."

"Even if she asks for you," said the doctor, "I think it best for you to stay away until her nerves are quieter."

As there was nothing further the two men could do, they walked down-town together, leaving Mrs. Hayes to watch over Gloria.

It was nine o'clock before the girl opened her eyes. Dr. Hayes had been home to dinner and then gone out again. His wife was sit-

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ting in Gloria's room reading by a light which was carefully shaded so as not to annoy the sleeper. She had turned several pages of her book with the feeling that her patient was now fully awake before she looked up to see if her belief was justified. Gloria was gazing vacantly at the ceiling.

"Is there anything you want, dear?" she asked, going over to the bed.

As Mrs. Hayes looked down at the girl, she seemed to her like a lily that had been beaten by the wind and bruised by the rain and left all forlorn to die. In the girl's face she read the story of the last few hours.

"Is there anything you want, dear?" she repeated.

"Nothing."

Gloria looked up at her with a pathetic little smile of appreciation for her kindness. She threw one hand out on top of the cover, and Mrs. Hayes took it in hers. It was some time, however, before Gloria spoke.

"You heard everything?"

"Yes."

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“And you understand?”

“I think I do, Gloria.”

“Then there isn’t anything much for me to tell you.”

For a long time she preserved silence, Mrs. Hayes holding her hand but saying nothing.

“It is n’t as if he had died,” she began slowly, almost as if just talking aloud to herself. “I think I could have stood that. In time everything would have come to be just a beautiful dream, Paris and Belmont and all. In my heart I could always have cherished the memory of a strong, brave man, the man I thought he was. You know, Mrs. Hayes, he seemed to me to be very much like my father.”

For a time she thought it over to herself. Mrs. Hayes did not press her, and continued to show her sympathy by holding her hand.

“Yes, it would have been a lot better had he died before I ever knew. What would have been a beautiful dream is now only a hideous nightmare. And I believed in him so! You who have seen just a little of him can’t know how I loved him. It was n’t exactly love when

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we were abroad in the same party. Yes, it was; only I did n't know it. It was n't until he had gone away and no word came from him that I knew how much he was to me. And then I met him here. Heaven seemed to open for me that night."

She turned her head for a minute, and the tears began to flow. When she began again her eyes were still blurred with tears.

"I can tell you, and I could tell Mrs. Gilbert, that it's going to hurt me a lot. It's going to hurt to think how I was deceived. I thought I was building my house of life upon a rock, and when the rains came I awoke to find the foundation was only shifting sand."

"We all have our troubles, dear," Mrs. Hayes told her. "Yours may seem hard to bear, but you must know that life can't all be painted in rainbow hues. I've taken you with me into Belmont's unhappiest homes, and what you have seen should teach you to bear your own trials with resignation and fortitude as a Christian should. Perhaps it's not well to think how much better off we are than other

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people, but when we do think of it we see that God has shown us abundant kindness compared to that given to others, and then our crosses are lighter."

"But I loved him so!" cried Gloria, burying her face in the pillow.

Mrs. Hayes could only clasp the girl's hand. The attempt to comfort her was unprofitable. Her grief was too new, her wounds too fresh for comfort. Longer and longer grew the intervals between her sobs. Finally Mrs. Hayes thought she had fallen asleep, but Gloria was only thinking. It came to her that she was still young. Love would never be hers, she was sure of that; but long years stretched out before her. She could n't be a coward and shirk those years. Once she had built her house of love and life upon the quaking sands, now she would build her house of life upon the firm rock of service. In ministering to the unfortunate, she might find surcease for her own sorrow.

"Mrs. Hayes?"

"What, Gloria?"

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"I'm not going to let anything that happened today spoil my life."

"Of course not, dear. Rain today means sunshine tomorrow for us."

"I don't know about the sunshine, but I do know that I want to go along just as if nothing had happened. Tomorrow let's do just what we planned to do, and the next day and the next. I want to keep busy. Can't you understand?"

Mrs. Hayes did understand, and admired the girl for her bravery.

"All right, Gloria. I think that is best. We were n't put into this world to have only the good things of life and shirk the bad things. We must take them as they come, the bad with the good. You are doing just what Mr. Wright would have you do if he were the man you thought him and he had died before your wedding day. Perhaps all will come out as you once had planned."

The daughter of David Kerr shook her head.

"That can never be."

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She said no more, and after a time seemed to fall asleep. Mrs. Hayes unclasped her hand, turned out the light, and left the room.

Through the windows streamed the moonlight. The girl, assured that she was alone, turned on her side and watched the beams creep slowly across the room.

What a flood of memories the moonlight brought!

Those first nights on shipboard had been under a silver moon that shed its rays upon a silver sea. Those nights in France a month later had been under a moon no less gorgeous. Then had come the Rhine and there, too, had been moonlight.

She tried to think of him as he had been and not as he was. In him she had found every good trait a man should have. She was chagrined to think how easily it now appeared she had been won. How much she would have been spared, she pondered, had she not been so eager for his love as to show him so soon that she cared for him.

Every familiar gesture which was at all a



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part of him she knew would call him to mind when another man might make it. The way he held his cigar when he smoked, the odd manner in which he would lock his hands together whenever a knotty problem bothered him, these little things and a host of others would come back to plague her.

All the dear, dead past crowded into her mind. It was not of the man whom that afternoon she had spurned that she thought, but of the man whom in her heart she cherished—her ideal.

With a mighty sob she began again to weep. There had come to her the realization that love was done. Far across the room the moonbeams crept before Gloria fell into a fitful slumber.

## CHAPTER XVII

“**I**’VE forgotten what we’d planned for this afternoon,” Gloria remarked to Mrs. Hayes the morning after the stormy scene in Judge Gilbert’s office. Yesterday was carefully ignored by both as they talked.

“This was the day Mrs. Wallace asked us to help her at the mission,” Mrs. Hayes explained.

She did not say further that she had telephoned earlier in the morning and had Mrs. Wallace, the matron, make plans whereby the whole afternoon would be taken up. She believed Gloria’s peace of mind would be all the greater were she engaged in some work which would make her feel that through her the pain of the sufferer was alleviated and the bruised heart of the unhappy bound up.

It was just two o’clock when they reached

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the mission. They had not been there long before Mrs. Wallace suggested that they call on a poor girl who was ill in a room over Mike Noonan's saloon. The sick woman was known to her, but she told nothing of her story. It was n't much different from any one of half a hundred she might have told.

The two women felt not the slightest fear in walking through such a tough quarter of the town. Mrs. Hayes was an experienced settlement worker, and knew many of the persons whom they passed. They for their part knew her and respected her for the kindly charity she dispensed so unostentatiously. As for Gloria, she could fear nothing since she was almost in total ignorance of what dangers might beset their path. Then, too, she was busy with her own thoughts.

Mrs. Hayes had been told in what room the sick woman lay, and without a word to any one, in fact they saw no one, they went in the door on the side street and climbed the dark, uncarpeted stairs to the third floor. At a door just at the foot of the flight of steps which led to

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the fourth story, Mrs. Hayes knocked gently. There was no answer. She decided that if there was no response to the next knock she would open the door to see if the girl were asleep. A second and louder knock, however, aroused her and she called to them to enter.

Gloria and Mrs. Hayes walked into the room, and as the latter went to the bedside to explain how they happened to call, the daughter of David Kerr stood stock still and gazed about her with undisguised curiosity.

The occupant of the room, a frail little creature with uncertain, golden hair, was known to her companions as Little Ella. Upon the blotter at the police station she was always booked as Luella Windermere. She had found the name in a novel and, liking it, had taken it for her own. In the unkindly daylight, without the paint that mocked the cheek that once had bloomed a healthier hue, the pallor of her face was heightened by the dark circles under her eyes. Yet the ravages of a life too harsh for one so weak had not been so great as to blot

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entirely from her face the traces of a simpering sweetness.

If Little Ella's room could be summed up in one word, that word would be—sham. It was not a poverty that honestly confessed itself to be such, that room. Instead it was a poverty that slunk away into corners and hid behind the rankest imitations of better things. Everything seemed to have been purchased at the cheapest booths at Vanity Fair. There were few things of substance, but many things of vain and empty show. Had Gloria been more skilled in reading the world aright, every bauble, every useless ornament would have preached a sermon. As it was, there was for her in large part only the interest of novelty.

To the right of Gloria were two windows looking out over the roofs of neighboring houses. Between them was a scarred maple dresser. It was littered among other things with post-card photographs, business cards, a calendar with a picture in many colors and a bottle of Florida water. Directly in front of

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her was the sick girl's bed, a cheap iron affair with massive tarnished brass trimmings. Beyond it was a frail-looking trunk painted in imitation of leather. The only things which boldly confessed themselves to be just as represented were two wooden kitchen chairs.

Looking close beside her, Gloria saw a battered maple washstand and beyond it a door which led into a closet under the stairs. She glanced curiously at the walls, which boasted some cheap prints, most of them showing by the advertising matter upon them from which whisky house they had emanated. Some of the girl's waists and skirts hung upon nails, but the clothes which she had taken off the night before on retiring were upon a chair beside her trunk.

"I heard you were sick," Mrs. Hayes said sympathetically, "and I want to know if I can do anything to help you."

Little Ella viewed them with cold antagonism. They were not of her world and she both feared and hated them.

"Naw," she growled. Then against her

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real wishes something out of her old life made her add grudgingly, "Much obliged."

Mrs. Hayes had worked too long among such people not to understand, and she ignored the girl's unfriendly manner by asking, "How do you feel to-day?"

"Rotten."

"No wonder; it's so close in here. I think it would be better for you if you'd let me open a window. It's mild out. May I?"

"Go as fer as yuh like; I don't feel like fightin'."

A nod from Mrs. Hayes sent Gloria to open a window.

"There now," exclaimed the younger visitor. "You'll feel better."

"Gloria," Mrs. Hayes asked, so the sick woman could not hear, "do you mind staying with her while I go to the mission for a few minutes? I want Mrs. Wallace to come over if she can; and the doctor, too, as soon as I can find him."

"Certainly, I'll stay," was the prompt response. "What's the matter with her?"

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"I can't say until I see the doctor, because I'm not sure. I want Dr. Hayes to see her. If I can't get him I'll get Dr. Norton. You're not afraid to stay?"

Gloria smiled. What was there to fear? The girl surely could not become so ill in the short space of time Mrs. Hayes should be away as to render her inexperienced nurse absolutely helpless.

"Of course I'm not afraid," she replied. Then impulsively, "Besides, I want to do some good in the world. I've been too selfish."

"No, dear, not that," her companion gently remonstrated. "Thoughtless, perhaps, because you did n't know, but not selfish." Then she turned to Little Ella and said in the same quiet tone, "I think you'd be happier where there'd be some one to take care of you."

"I'm not sick, I'm just tired."

The ignorant fear sickness and disguise it as long as they can, shirking the fight and thereby making it all the harder. Understanding this, Mrs. Hayes answered lightly:

"If that's the case, I hope you'll entertain



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my friend for me until I return. She 's interested in the work at the mission."

"You 're on," Little Ella replied with an air of resignation as Mrs. Hayes left the room. She rolled over on her side and closed her eyes. Already she began to feel bored.

Although Gloria had professed that she had no fear about being left with the sick woman, when she said it she had in mind only a fear of being alone in such a dismal lodging house and fear that she might be called upon to act as doctor and trained nurse both were her patient to take a turn for the worse. Now, however, a new thought came to her. How was she to act? What was she to do to amuse her? She felt instinctively the antipathy she had aroused. She cowered like a lamb before this young she-wolf of the city. She was alone, defenseless, with this creature that had so far reverted to type that she might rend and tear. Even in a battle of wits, and that was all there would be if the girl did not ignore her entirely, Gloria felt herself no match for this brazen child of misfortune. Her com-

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parisons were physical, but it was not a physical fear she felt. Sheltered inexperience was pitted against the most cruel experience society could ever devise or tolerate.

Gloria was mistaken in thinking that Little Ella slept. After Mrs. Hayes had left her she walked quietly back to a chair by the bedside. On it lay a cheap novel with which the sick woman had been beguiling the time. She picked it up and was turning the pages casually when a feeling stole over her that she was being observed. Putting aside the book, she found Little Ella gazing at her stonily.

“Say, what ’d you come here for?”

“Why,” she answered in surprise, “I wanted to help you.”

A sneer curled the sick woman’s lip, a cynical sneer of disbelief.

“Help me! To what? I ain’t ever saw you down here before. Come on, what brought you?”

“I came with Mrs. Hayes,” was all that Gloria could find to answer.

“The woman what just went out?”

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“Yes.”

Feeling that she must do something to end this catechism, Gloria happened to glance at the book she held in her hand, and this led her to ask, “Would n’t you like me to read to you?”

“Naw. I can read fer myself.”

“Perhaps there is something else I might do. What do you say, I might write a letter for you?”

“A letter? Who to?”

“Is n’t there some one who ought to know you are sick?”

“Who’d want to hear from me?” the woman replied sullenly. “I ain’t the belle o’ the village any more.”

“Have n’t you a mother?”

“She’s dead.”

“A father, then? Is n’t there some one watching for you, hoping to see you come down the quiet little street?”

Here was an attempt to awaken a sentiment for the past which met with no success. Little Ella replied roughly:

“They’re watching at his house all right—

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all right—him and that pasty-face wife of his—so they can run out and unchain the dog. Then they 'd gather in the parlor an' say prayers fer the dead—that 's me."

"What could you have done to have your family treat you so?" Gloria asked. "What could you do to be estranged from your father, of all persons?"

This was something Gloria could not understand. Once she would not have understood a lack of love where two had lived together continuously. Now she could waive that point, but the estrangement was beyond her.

Little Ella considered the question gravely. What was she to tell this inquisitive girl who evidently was not asking questions just for the fun of prying into some one else's life? Somehow or other Gloria began to appeal to her. She had decided that the visitor's ignorance was real, not feigned. In reply to the question as to why she was not received at home, she turned her big dark eyes, lusterless now, upon Gloria, and said quietly:

"I loved."

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“Oh!” exclaimed Gloria, and a sudden pain shot through her.

“Oh, what?”

“Was it really love?”

The question came forth without a thought of how it might affect her hearer. It did, indeed, provoke Little Ella, taking away that kindly feeling which had begun to kindle in her heart because of Gloria's ignorance.

“Did n't I say I loved?” she demanded harshly. “What do you know of love? You can't come down here and teach me anything. Pooh! I don't believe you know what real love is. Was you ever in love?”

Ordinarily to a girl reared as Gloria had been no more serious affront could have been offered her. It was a meddling with her private affairs which was unpardonable.

“Was you?”

Little Ella asked the question again with the sharpness gained from listening to the city attorney cross-examine witnesses in police court. Seeing that she was almost compelled to say “yes” or “no,” Gloria replied defiantly:

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"Yes, I was."

"An' yer not married?"

"No."

"Goin' to be?"

A pause.

"No."

"Say, yer overlookin' a bet. What's the matter?"

Gloria felt herself fascinated by this slight little woman who in her excitement had propped herself up in bed on a thin, trembling arm. The light had come back into her eyes as she pursued her inquiries and they shone like two burning coals.

"He did n't really love me," Gloria said more to herself than to the girl.

"Did he tell you so? How do you know?" There was no answer. "Huh! You asked me questions so I thought I'd ask you some. Did he know you loved 'im?"

"He did, but—my father discovered that he was unworthy."

This information seemed to Little Ella to

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be a bond of fellowship. She fell back on the bed to rest, and remarked philosophically,

“Humph! My ol’ man thought the feller I loved was no good, too. Guess we’ve had pretty hard times, eh?” No reply, “What d’ you think?”

“I—I—he was unworthy.”

It was now Gloria who spoke listlessly.

“So you had to choose between ’im an’ yer father?”

“Was there any choice? I gave him up.”

“I left home. So, you see, I’ve loved more ’n you’ve ever loved,” she cried. “You did n’t really love.” There was scorn in her voice as she spoke. “I’ve gone through fire an’ storm fer the man I loved, because I loved a real man. You must ’a’ loved some kid at the ribbon counter. A real man would n’t ’a’ let you give him up.”

This was a tribute to the animal perfection of the graceful young creature before her. The sight of Gloria as something to be desired, to be possessed, made Little Ella feel that no

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man with red blood in his veins would give her up without a fight. She hated her for her masses of beautiful hair, her deep, soulful eyes, her complexion of apple blossoms, and her delicate white hands. She hated her for her svelte, girlish figure and her beautiful clothes which brought out her best lines. A woman may be down in the world, but she has eyes to see.

“Look at me,” she cried, beating her flat breasts with her red, bony hands. “A man died fer me—an’ he thought I was worth it. Did you love a man well enough for him to do that fer you?”

Gloria could only avoid the question by tactlessly referring to Little Ella’s present state.

“You don’t know what you’re saying. Can’t you see what he’s brought you to?”

“Don’t you say a word against him,” snapped the sick woman. “All men ain’t alike, neither. It was n’t his fault I’m here. It’s the system.”

“The system! What’s that?”

Here was the introduction of a new element.



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Gloria's curiosity was aroused. There was something inexorable about it, to judge from Little Ella's manner of speaking.

"Well, call it society, if you want to," conceded society's victim.

"What do you mean?"

"Say, are you stringin' me, or was you born yestiddy?"

She laughed harshly at the humor of such a question.

"I don't understand," was all Gloria could reply.

## CHAPTER XVIII

**G**LORIA had not been reared without an understanding of the various layers of society. Of those close to her own station in life she had an intimate and intelligent knowledge, but as she went down the scale her acquaintanceship grew slighter and her understanding more vague. The poor creatures whom as a class Little Ella now represented to her were almost as foreign and as misunderstood as would be a lama of Thibet. Having no knowledge, she could have no real pity.

Gloria had never dreamed, even when she tried to put the worst possible construction on what few things she knew, that the world could be so cruel. Never for an instant had she thought that it was possible for men whom she regarded as upright and honorable to be engaged directly or indirectly in exploiting vice

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and ignorance. It had never occurred to her that men whom she might know, some of them, owned dreary blocks of hovels and tenements from which high rents were secured only because the people who lived in them were not respectable. Poor and honest tenants could have paid but poor and precarious rents.

As Little Ella told her story of the "system" at Gloria's request, her voice grew shriller and shriller as the indictment grew graver. She talked rapidly, sometimes turning aside from the direct channel of her revelation, to explore some little eddy of a specific instance which made her account a reality. Gloria could have credited something to exaggeration had it not been that just at the moment she thought the girl was beginning to draw on her imagination some incident would be introduced suddenly to make the whole thing ghastly real.

For the first time the daughter of David Kerr learned of the peddlers of showy dresses, the venders of cheap perfumery, the stealthy disseminators of cocaine, and the many other leeches that fatten on the unfortunate of the

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underworld. She learned that all the misery was but a monument to human greed. Nothing was exploited in which there was not a profit of three or four hundred percent. Nothing was exploited which did not tend to kill the finer feelings, reducing the poor victims in time to the level of brutes.

“And the men down here,” Little Ella cried, the memory of the good, wholesome men whom she had known in her earlier life coming back to smite her, “poor ignorant excuses fer men, most of ’em—all they ’re good fer is to steal an’ lie an’ live off us women, an’ vote the way the boss tells ’em on ’lection day. An’ who ’s responsible fer that? Say?” Gloria could make no reply, and Ella, whose pause had been rhetorical, uncouth as she was, made answer herself. “I know. The fine gentlemen what buys the votes. An’ when they needs more money fer more votes they send the p’lice ’round, an’ us poor girls has to pay, always pay.”

“I never dreamed of such a thing.”

“I tol’ you you did n’t know. Why, oncet I was good like you, too. An’ now,” she began

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to sob—"now—I 'm down—an' I can't git up, I can't git up. It 's too late."

Suddenly Gloria remembered the power to which she would appeal. Where a minute before had been darkness and uncertainty was now the clearness of a summer day.

"It 's never too late," she insisted. "Remember, I 'm not alone. My father will help me. He 's brave and good and strong, with a heart of gold. I can't change the world's ways, maybe, but I can do something to make Belmont better with my father's help—and yours."

Gloria was a doughty Crusader, and was eager to plunge at once into the work of reform. She was going to permit her father to be a ways and means committee, but she intended to have a thorough grasp of the whole situation herself.

"Why do you pay this—this blackmail?" Gloria demanded.

"I 've got to live. What else can I do—now? I 'm down, an' in debt."

"But they can't keep you from living."

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“They can send me to the workhouse.”  
And at the thought Little Ella shuddered.

“Whom does this money go to? I want to get that part of it absolutely straight so I can tell father.”

“It goes to the boss, of course.”

Little Ella made this statement in a matter-of-fact manner. The methods of the “system” were so notorious that she did not have to think a moment before giving her answer.

The boss. Here was a factor in the game of which Gloria as yet had had no inkling. The boss. What does he do? Now she desired to know about this boss.

“The boss?” Both the tone of her question and the look on her face denoted her interrogation.

“Yes, the boss gits the money.” Little Ella saw that it would be necessary for her to explain. “I thought everybody in Belmont knowed that. I gives it to Noonan mostly, but sometimes the round-sergeant collects, an’ sometimes they both do.”

This double collection was n’t on the square,

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but what was she to do? If she complained, she knew too well what would happen to her.

“Who ’s Noonan?”

“Mike Noonan? He runs the saloon down stairs, an’ rents me this room. He gits a rake-off from ’most everybody down here.”

“He must be a rich man.”

“Oh, some—but he ’s got to pass a lot of it on.”

“And you say the police know about this?”

Little Ella looked at her in amazement. To Gloria a policeman was a stalwart individual with white gloves who halted traffic while she crossed the avenue. To the other a policeman was an enemy, a grafter who never overlooked an opportunity to feather his own nest or line his own pocketbook. The best that she ever could say for any one of them was that he was an autocratic rowdy. Gloria’s simplicity in asking if the police knew of this tribute caused her to reply:

“They ought to—they git some of it. Then the man higher up gits his.”

“I can’t believe it. When you get well I

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want you to come and tell my father all this. He is—he's an influential man. I'm sure he'll help you. He shall help you," she added decisively, "and every poor, unhappy person down here, because I shall tell him to."

Little Ella looked at her, all admiration for such power.

"Gee! I wisht I had a pa like yourn," was all that she could say.

"He can't know that such things are happening—here—every day in Belmont."

"If he did, I reckon he would n't tell you." Little Ella was more conversant with the ways of the world.

"And what did you say finally becomes of this money you have to pay?"

"The boss gits it."

"Oh, yes. This boss—who is he? What does he do to earn this money?"

"That's what he gits fer pertectin' us. He keeps the bulls from juggin' us."

"And if you don't pay?"

"He gives 'em the tip an' we're hauled in, and sent up for thirty days."



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This did n't accord with Gloria's idea of law and justice. Here was a man who, without authority and as his whim dictated, arrested people because they would not do something unlawful. And the police, instead of being instruments of the law, were under the direction of this boss.

"Can't the law touch him?" she asked.

"Huh! He's the law in this town."

"Do you mean to tell me there is a man so base," demanded the daughter of David Kerr indignantly, "this boss, that spends his time collecting this money?"

Little Ella had come to realize soon after they had met that she was dealing with a fledgling. Hence she bore with her and answered her questions patiently.

"Gosh! Little time he spends collecting money down here." Her tone indicated clearly that he spent no time at all. "What's the cops fer? What's Mike Noonan fer? He's got other things to do himself. I oncet knowed a young lawyer, an' he tol' me the boss got his from the big gamblin' houses, an' the street car

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comp'ny, an' the 'lectric light comp'ny, an' big things like that."

"Then you 're just a drop in the bucket." The magnitude of the "system" was just beginning to dawn on Gloria. She now saw that its ramifications were many, that there must be much that even this woman, for all her knowledge, could know little of. While she could not learn all from Little Ella, she could learn enough to make her father investigate.

"There 's enough of us drops in Belmont to fill a pretty big bucket," the girl admitted. "Gimme a drink o' water, will you? I never was so dry at a Dutch picnic."

Gloria poured a glass of water for her. Then, feeling that she had not been considerate in asking the girl to tax her little strength by the recital of a story that sadly wasted her vital energy, she begged her to rest.

"You 're still a bit feverish. Lie down now and rest. Try to go to sleep, and I 'll sit here and read."

Soon her patient seemed to sleep, and Gloria picked up a book and tried to read. The rev-

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elations to which she had listened made all possibility of concentration upon the printed page out of the question. Suddenly it occurred to her that she did not know the boss's name. Just as this came into her mind, the girl turned restlessly and opened her eyes. Finding that she was awake, Gloria asked:

"Tell me, what's the name of the boss?"

"Eh? What?" Little Ella was not thoroughly awake.

"What's the name of the boss? I want to tell father."

"His name? Oh! it's Kerr. He's ol' Dave Kerr. Ever hear of him?"

Having roused herself sufficiently to answer the question, Little Ella sank again into a doze.

As for Gloria, it almost seemed that the words meant nothing to her at all. So slowly did her mind accept this intelligence that the fall of the book unnoticed to the floor did not seem related in point of time. Yet in fact it told that her mind was intent upon one question: Who was the boss of Belmont?

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“Kerr! Kerr! Old Dave Kerr,” still rang in her ears. “The boss? David Kerr? I wonder what relation—.” The very ignominy of the thought restrained her. “No, no, no. It’s all a mistake. It can’t be— I could n’t believe it. There can’t be any relation of my father’s—my fa— It’s absurd. It would be maddening, the suspicion of such a thing. Why, my father’s the soul of honor.”

Without warning, Joe Wright came into her mind; Joe Wright, her evil genius.

“What did the paper say? ‘The king of underhand manipulators, David Kerr!’ The king!” she muttered aloud, and clapped her hand over her mouth at the word. The thought of such a thing widened her eyes with terror and set her heart to beating high with sudden fear. “But not this, O God! Not this.”

She repeated the pathetic words of Little Ella.

“‘There’s enough of us drops in Belmont to fill a pretty big bucket’—oh, it can’t be my

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father! It can't be my father!—He has a daughter—It's all a horrid mistake. There must be another David Kerr, I'm sure."

Gloria sprang from her chair and seized the sleeping woman roughly by the arm.

"Listen to me. Tell me something more of David Kerr."

She shook Little Ella into a conscious state and repeated the question.

"Which David Kerr is it?"

"There's only one I know of," answered Ella. "He's got a real estate office on Fifth Street."

"What!"

The net of circumstance was being drawn tighter and tighter about one man, and that man her father.

"Are you sure he's the man, girl?"

Gloria asked the question in as subdued a manner as possible. Suddenly she had become afraid. She did not wish to arouse suspicion.

"Sure, he's the man." It tried one's patience to be roused from sleep, and then to meet

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with contradiction was enough to make one petulant. To settle the question so that she could go back to sleep, Little Ella added:

“Look on my bureau and you ’ll see a programme of the Dave Kerr Demmycratic Club Ball.”

Gloria walked over to the bureau with its jumble of odds and ends, and began to turn over the things mechanically.

“No, not that. Look behind that photy-graft. That ’s it. That ’s his picture on the front.”

Gloria gave one look. The picture was that of her father.

For a time Little Ella chattered drowsily, but Gloria did not hear. She was prostrated by a grief that numbed her every faculty. The foundation of her faith had been swept away.

What she beheld seemed to burn itself into her brain. On the cover of the programme were the words: “Annual Ball. David Kerr Democratic Club,” and the picture of her father. It was the truth; her father was the

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boss of Belmont. So different was her position from that pinnacle on which she had thought herself to be that the whole world would have to go through a revolutionary orientation. There was nothing in her life which would not have to be adjusted anew because of this revelation.

As she turned the pages of the programme, pages filled with liquor and saloon advertisements, her thoughts were all of herself. Resentment and anger there were, directed toward her father, but now in the first moments when she saw herself as Belmont saw her, humiliation conquered all other emotions. Her first thought of Joe Wright was that he had kept the truth from her. She could not grow more sick at heart, comparative feeling was out of the question because she was completely crushed, but she saw as in a book that had been written and laid away as finished, the sacrifice he had made for her, the supreme renunciation he had made because he would not denounce her father before her.

The thought of how different her home-com-

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ing had been from what she had planned made her laugh hysterically. Then when she recalled the few staunch friends she had made she clutched wildly at the hope that after all it was untrue.

“It’s a lie, every word of it, a lie his enemies invent. What big man but has about him envious wasps that prick and sting? Judge Gilbert, Mr. Kendall, Dr. Hayes, they’ll all say that he—Joe Wright! What of him? What will he say?”

She put this man that had loved her in one balance and the other men in the other. He outweighed them all, and the momentary hope was gone. She could see it all now. As the baffling attitude of Belmont revealed itself to her bit by bit she buried her face in her arms and sobbed.

“And I was so proud, oh, so proud!” moaned the daughter of David Kerr. “Joe! Joe! You did love me!—I sent him away, and I never understood. Now I can see it all. The social slights—the cold disdain I could not understand—the whispers that died away before



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they reached my ears—all, all, all because I was David Kerr's daughter, David Kerr, the boss of Belmont."

Her father's name exercised a fascination over her. Again and again she repeated it, her lips curling with scorn.

"David Kerr, the boss of Belmont!" she cried with a contempt that wrung her heart. "David Kerr, the king of underhand manipulators! David Kerr, the man these wretched women look to for protection—and pay him for it!"

This new thought was a poisoned arrow that sank into her heart. As she dwelt upon it her eyes fell upon her handsome tailored coat and her beautiful hat she had laid aside.

"And with the money these unhappy creatures pay, he—he—God in Heaven! Where did the money come from for these clothes I wear? What shall I do? All these years, and I never knew!"

Where the money came from to pay for her handsome clothes wracked her as poignantly as would a great physical pain. Her thoughts

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were incoherent, skipping from one horrid phase of the situation to another. Though they were disconnected, they were not vague. Each was a ruthless view of her deplorable position.

“Why did he let me come home? How can I bear to have any one look at me on the street? I can hear them now saying, ‘That’s she, the boss’s daughter. See her fine clothes. We know where the money came from to buy them.’ And I, like a leper, must ever cry, ‘Unclean, unclean,’ and see those whom I would love flee ever on before me.”

This made her think again of Joe Wright. Surely he had loved her beyond all reason to have wished to marry her, the daughter of such a man.

“Joe, poor old Joe, how he has suffered because of me.” She had chosen in her blindness not to listen to him and now he was gone forever. She had obeyed the dictation of pride and stifled the prompting of love, and now her punishment seemed greater than she could bear. “He did love me. He knew, and

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still loved me. And I drove him away. Well, it was better so; but he did love me—once. It's better so—for him.”

It was now a far more grievous prospect than that of the long years which had confronted her when she had realized the previous day how solitary was to be her way. Then she had had position, power, and pride; now these had been stripped from her, and nothing had been given in their stead. In a passionate flood of tears she sank to the floor and cried as if her heart would break.

Through it all Little Ella slept, not knowing that in her room was being enacted a tragedy of the heart more profound than any she with all her shallowness could live in a century of heartaches.

## CHAPTER XIX

**G**RIEF made Gloria insensible to the flight of time, and how long she had been prostrate on the floor before sounds on the stairs aroused her she did not know. Thinking that it must be Mrs. Hayes returning with a physician, she rose hastily and tried to remove all traces of her tears. She wished above all to avoid explanations, and if none was asked she did not wish to have her grief misconstrued. But it was not Mrs. Hayes, for Gloria could hear the heavy tread ascending to the floor above.

Little Ella was restless and rolled and tossed in her sleep. The daughter of David Kerr looked with pity upon her. Her discipline was too new, her spirit was still too untamed for her to understand fully the kinship of the human race. Although she recognized that she was herself without the caste she thought

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was hers, she had not come to know that on the last great day there would be only the judgment of the just and the unjust, not of the high and the low, of the rich and the poor, of the wise and the ignorant, of the master and the servant.

“Poor girl,” murmured Gloria, “you shall see that I do understand.”

There was also much which she could learn from this bit of flotsam cast up by an unkind sea upon a cheerless shore. Seeing that Little Ella was not sleeping soundly, her desire to know more got the better of her duty as a nurse. She shook her gently, and soon was rewarded by seeing her eyes open.

“What you want?” asked the patient.

“Time to take your medicine,” Gloria answered unblushingly. This was only a subterfuge, and it hurt her to receive the profuse thanks which it evoked.

“How are we going to begin to make things right down here?” Gloria asked when Little Ella had sunk back upon her pillow.

“Begin?” The girl did not understand.

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"Yes, you and I. Things can't go on as they are."

"Why, begin with the boss, of course."

Gloria could not have been stabbed by a more cruel reply.

"Ah, yes," she sighed, "but how?"

"That 's up to you and yer pa."

Little Ella recognized that the boss was out of her sphere of influence.

"Yes, yes, I know. Tell me—does—David Kerr," she spoke the name with an effort, "ever—come down here?"

"Him? Naw. We never see nothin' o' him." His daughter gave a sigh of relief. "We don' know nothin' 'bout him much. We don't see him, but we feel him. He lives alone, out in the country."

"Then can he really know?"

"He's a man, ain't he?" demanded the woman of the streets fiercely. "He knows, but what does he care? I wisht he had a daughter."

"What's that?" Gloria asked. The manner in which Little Ella had spoken made her

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catch her breath with a feeling that was akin to dread.

“I wisht he had a daughter, an’ that she ’d have to suffer what we down here suffer.”

Gloria held up her hand, bidding her cease from even thinking such a thing.

“No, no, no, not that.”

“Why not?” the other went on doggedly. “Could she be any better ’n I was oncet? I tell you, I ’d like to have a daughter of his here, and watch her struggle to keep the breath in her body.”

“Have you no mercy?” begged Gloria.

“What mercy hev I had shown me by Noonan—’cept fer his own profit? What mercy from David Kerr? Would n’t he laugh to see a daughter o’ his in this hell-hole?” Gloria convulsively covered her eyes with her hands as if to shut out even the thought of such a sight. Little Ella went on harshly, “What a joke it would be! But I ’d laugh. I ’d watch her, the little darling, to see that she paid the price as I ’ve done.”

Gloria could stand it no longer.

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“Stop, you senseless girl. You make a mockery of pity and compassion. It’s absurd to vent your rage upon something that does n’t exist. David Kerr has no daughter.”

Little Ella accepted this answer without question, unmindful that a short while before her visitor had denied all knowledge of the man.

“I wisht he had,” she said regretfully.

A door slammed suddenly overhead.

“Are n’t you afraid here alone?” Gloria asked.

“Naw. I ain’t scared in the daytime, an’ at night I ’m out most o’ the time.”

The sound of a scuffle on the floor above brought both women to attention. There came a sudden, smothered cry for help which made Gloria’s blood run cold. Then there was a heavy thud as if some one had been felled by a blow.

“What ’s it all about?” she cried, springing to her feet in terror.

“Nothin’. Stay where you are. We’re safe as long as we don’ open that door.”



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The sounds of the affray grew louder. Again came the cry for help.

“What’s going on? I must know. Some one’s in trouble. Didn’t you hear some one call?”

“They’re maybe just foolin.’” Ella was listening intently. “Don’t you butt in.”

“But I can’t stand here doing nothing. I must see what’s the matter.”

One could never accuse Gloria of lack of courage. She had never seen the horse she was afraid of, and a sailboat in a heavy sea made her laugh the more, the louder the wind whistled through the rigging. Her feeling of personal power, inherited from her father, had been strongly developed. She had by this time overcome her first fear, and now she intended to know what the trouble was all about. Some one was in distress and to do what she could was her one thought as she started toward the door.

“Better not open that door,” Little Ella pleaded.

Even as she spoke, they heard a door slam

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at the head of the stairs above. Some one lurched heavily to the stairway, and then to their horror—they knew it by the sound just as well as if the scene had been enacted before their eyes—the man tripped and plunged down the narrow stairs.

“I must know what’s going on,” Gloria cried.

She rushed across the room and wrenched open the door. At the foot of the stairway just before her was the body of a man, limp and motionless.

“It’s a man. He’s hurt,” she called back to the sick woman as she knelt to examine him.

He had fallen so that she could not get a good look at him in the dark hallway, and she rolled him toward the door to get him on his back and see his face. As she gazed upon his countenance the fingers of death itself seemed to seize her by the throat. Her heart gave one great leap and then stood still. On the floor before her lay the body of the man she loved.

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“Joe!” she screamed. “What are you doing here? Joe, Joe, speak to me!”

But there was no answer. His eyes were closed, and the pallor of death seemed to be upon his face.

With strength beyond what she had ever known herself to possess, Gloria seized the motionless form and dragged and rolled the man into Little Ella's room. Before she turned to him again she closed and bolted the door. Then she bent over him and begged him to speak to her, to open his eyes and know that she was with him.

“Joe, don't you know me?” she pleaded. Then to Little Ella, “He's dead, he's dead. See, he does n't move.”

“Yes, he does,” answered the other woman. She had been sitting up in bed, an excited spectator of all that had transpired. “He's breathin'. Tear open his shirt and feel his heart beat.”

Wright was a pitiable object as he lay on the floor like one dead. His coat and waistcoat were gone, and his collar and cravat had

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been torn away. On his white shirt were bloody stains. Gloria felt for his heart and was rewarded by its feeble beat. She next dashed water from the pitcher over his face, but without avail. He showed no signs of returning consciousness. From a wound just above his temple on the right side of his head the blood began to trickle down over his face, making its pallor all the more ghastly. She had no means of knowing how serious this was, and naturally came to the conclusion that it was a death-wound. There was only one thing to do: get a physician.

As she started to her feet she heard two men running down the stairs and making a search from room to room on her floor. These must be the men who had attacked him. She could not let him fall into their hands, and therefore she could not leave him to go for aid. The impotence of her position made her feel like screaming to relieve the nervous strain.

“What do you know about this? How did he come here? What has happened to him?”

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"I dunno," answered the woman. "There 's somethin' doin' all the time in this dump."

A sudden knock at the bolted door chilled Gloria with terror.

"What 's that?" she whispered

"Somebody 's at the door," replied Little Ella, in the same low tone. This fact was obvious.

"They can't come in," Gloria continued.

Again came the knocking, louder and more insistent.

"I can't let anything happen to him," murmured the unhappy girl in agony, remembering how the day before she had demanded that he be punished. "Joe, Joe, what does it all mean?"

But Wright made no answer. He lay like a log as the girl he had loved bent over him, wiped the blood from his face, and brushed back his disheveled hair.

With the next knock came the voice of a man demanding entrance.

"Ella, Ella, open this door."

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Gloria rushed over to the bed.

"Tell him you can't get out of bed," she implored in a whisper. "Tell him there's nobody here."

"I can't git out o' bed. There's nobody here," Little Ella called.

This answer did not pacify the man.

"That's a lie," he shouted. "There's somebody in there or the door would n't be locked. Open this door, do you hear me, or I'll bust it down."

The tone of his voice made Gloria feel that he would make good his threat. There in the center of the room in full view lay the man whom they were seeking. Once they burst the single barrier they would be upon him, to do what further harm she knew not. It might be that he was now already beyond all human aid. He still breathed, however, and Gloria was willing to fight if there was even only one chance in his favor. Hence it would not do for them to find him the minute they broke down the door. She must hide him somewhere to give her time to parley with his assailants.

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She looked vainly about for some place to put him.

“For God’s pity, help me hide him,” she beseeched. “I can’t give him up. Where does that door lead to?” She pointed to the door close by the one which led into the hall.

“That’s only a closet under the stairway,” was Little Ella’s whispered explanation. “They’d find him there in a minute.”

“You would n’t let them kill him, would you?”

“I can’t help you. I’m so weak I can hardly turn over in bed.”

“Open this door, I say,” came from the man without as he pounded on the door ominously, “or I’ll crack you over the head.”

Gloria understood that there was no time to temporize. She must do something and that quickly. Close by where she stood next the bed, and on the side away from the door, was Little Ella’s trunk. Behind it on hooks hung a number of garments, and on a chair were more clothes. It was the only chance, and Gloria took it.

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How she ever managed to get him, a dead weight, across the intervening space and safely stowed behind the trunk she never knew. She dragged, she hauled, she pulled, she rolled, and the forlorn hope that she would save him yet gave her strength. As she snatched skirts from the hooks and all the clothing from the chair to pile upon him, the pounding upon the door became more and more vindictive. The girl was out of breath, but as she bent over the prostrate form of the man she loved, she managed to gasp:

“Joe, listen, listen to me. If you can hear me, dear, listen. Don’t you stir, don’t you make a sound until I come to you. Can you hear me, Joe?” But he was deaf to all entreaties. Seeing this was so, she turned to Little Ella. “Get him to go away. Offer him anything, promise him anything. I’ll do it; only keep that man on the other side of that door.”

“There’s at least two of ’em.”

“That does n’t matter—a thousand—it’s all the same. Get them to go away.”



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This was easier said than done, but Little Ella was willing to make the effort.

“You git away from that door, an’ leave me alone.”

“Open this door, you she-devil,” threatened the besieger, “or I ’ll—”

And then interrupted another voice with a suggestion that made Gloria grow faint.

“Aw! Let’s bust it in. He’s in there all right.”

“Let ’er go,” answered the first one.

Then came the heavy thuds as the men threw themselves against the door. The knocking at the gate in “Macbeth” had no more portentous sound in the play than had this attack upon her stronghold to Gloria. She felt all the nervousness of troops under fire that must remain inactive awaiting orders. There was nothing she could do but wait until the door was battered down.

This was not long in happening. As she stood in front of the trunk nervously twisting her handkerchief in her hands, at one last mighty effort the bolt yielded, the door flew

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open and two men stumbled into the room. Little Ella recognized them both instantly. They were Buck Kelly and Turkey Ryan, notorious denizens of the underworld. If ever there were two vicious-looking cutthroats, these men answered their descriptions. To make their ruffianly appearance worse they bore the marks of their recent encounter. Kelly's left eye had swelled almost closed, and Ryan had a long cut across his cheek where Wright's ring had left its mark with a slashing blow. He had done even more damage than this, but these showed the plainest. Needless to say, their tempers had not been sweetened by the episode.

"Now, damn you—" Ryan began savagely.

"Stop!" Gloria commanded. "What are you doing here?"

Until she spoke they had not seen her, and both men were taken much aback. To find a lady there was something they had not expected.

"What the—" Ryan gasped, but checked himself and then continued in a slightly more

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respectful tone. "I begs yer pardon, miss, but what are you doin' here?"

"That 's none of your business. You clear out, both of you."

This encouraged Little Ella to take her part in the discussion, which she did with her most strident tones.

"What do youse mean, buttin' into here? Beat it, you two. I 'm a lady, an' when I has a lady frien' avisitin' me they ain't no place for bums. On yer way."

It was not this tirade which had the most effect upon them. Both quailed before Gloria, who stood eyeing them sternly. Then they looked at each other, and without a word of apology shambled out into the hall.

## CHAPTER XX

**I**F Gloria believed that she had put to flight for all time such gentlemanly assassins as Mr. Kelly and Mr. Ryan, her feeling of triumph did not last long. As the door into the hall was still open she did not dare make a move in Wright's direction. She determined to close the door and pull the washstand in front of it, wedging it under the knob, before trying further to succor the injured man. When she walked toward the door, it again framed the forms of Ryan and Kelly. As a result of a short conference just out of earshot, they had decided to return and get their man.

"What do you want?" Her heart sank.

"We 're lookin' fer a man," Kelly snarled.

"An' he come into this room, too," Ryan added doggedly. "We don't want to make

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you uncomf'table, lady, but we gotta git that man."

The way he said it made Gloria feel that he meant business. All she could do was play for time and pray for Mrs. Hayes to return.

"There 's no man here," she explained in her most winning manner. "You can see that plainly for yourself. I came over from the mission to take care of this sick woman. You are only making her worse by bursting into her room in such a rude fashion. Please go out gently; she must have it perfectly quiet."

Turkey Ryan so far forgot himself in the presence of his betters as to grin at this explanation.

"We don't want to have to make you give 'im up."

This threat had an unpleasant sound. Hitherto the girl had not feared for her own safety, but his surly remark frightened her. The one thing that kept her steadfast was the thought that she was protecting the man she had loved; yes, the man she now loved more than she ever had. She did not know how he

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happened to be there; she did not know how he regarded her; she only knew that she loved him, that she would give her life a sacrifice to save him.

Ryan next appealed to Little Ella.

"Ella, that guy come in here. Where is he? We ain't goin' to be scared by any fool girl. She don't know who wants him. Now give 'im up."

"Don't say a word," Gloria told her.

"You gotta stick by us, Ella. This ain't no ordinary job."

At Ryan's injunction to stick by him, Little Ella seemed to waver.

"Don' you fergit who yer friends are. Who keeps you from bein' jugged? Mike Noonan. Who lets you stay here when you can't pay, an' feeds you? Mike Noonan."

"That 's so. He has been good to me."

Gloria was quick to catch the note of indecision. "But now I'm going to take care of you."

"Yes, goin' to, goin' to," sneered Kelly. "You know what church promises is. Don'

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you fergit we gotta stan' together down here, all of us."

It was the old, old appeal of class to serve a selfish end.

"Yes, that 's true. I don' want to say anything, but—"

Ryan immediately pressed the advantage he thought he had gained.

"This is yer chanct, Ella. You know what she 'd say to you if you was in her house. Are you with us? I 'll see you git yours."

It was a moment when a man's life was at stake. Gloria believed that if the woman told and they tore Wright from her she might never see him alive again. She had prayed silently for help to come, but she was still alone. Already she was giving up hope from that quarter and was conscious that upon her own efforts in all probability the very life of the man she loved would depend. To add to her anguish was the fear that he might regain consciousness and betray himself by a moan.

Now it all depended upon Little Ella. It had been a clever stroke, that of Ryan's, asking

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her how she would be treated in this woman's home. Against this appeal to class prejudice Gloria had not scored.

"I 'll tell," said the woman.

The two men looked at each other and smiled.

"Stop!" cried Gloria, looking not at the men, but at the girl who lay pale and trembling upon the bed. "Do you remember what you said a while ago? What you accused me of? You swore I had n't loved. Even to my sorrow you shall have proof of it now that I do. The very man whom I'm defending from these bullies is the one man on earth I love." Ryan and Kelly looked at each other in amazement. "You shall see if you loved more than I. You've gone through fire and storm for a man? I'll do no less. If need be, I'll die for this man—here and now—because I love him." The fire died out of her eyes. She stretched out her hands to Ella pathetically and begged humbly, "My whole heart's happiness is here. Are you going to help them try to take him from me?"



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The woman, a creature of impulse, was moved.

“You ’d better give it up, Turkey. I ain’t goin’ to let you touch that man.”

“Ah, you ’re a woman,” sighed Gloria. “You know a woman’s heart.”

“Nix on that love spiel, Ella,” commanded Ryan. “This ain’t no valentine party, lady. You can’t fool us with that soft-soap talk. We gotta carry out the boss’s orders. Buck, look in that closet.”

Ryan recognized that the time for action had come. On his side he had the overwhelming brute force which would enable him to do as he pleased. Kelly had turned to look into the closet when he was stopped by Gloria’s outburst. What Ryan had said had reminded her of her own power.

“Stand where you are, you infamous thugs! Must I tell you the truth to be obeyed? If you are above the law, I am higher still. Mike Noonan could have told you who I am. You speak of your boss, then learn the truth.”

“What yer givin’ us?” jeered Ryan as he

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advanced toward the place where Wright lay hidden.

“Stand back,” she cried. “I am Gloria Kerr.”

The two men looked at each other in astonishment, and Little Ella sat bolt upright in bed.

“The boss’s—”

“Daughter,” Gloria finished Ryan’s exclamation. “I am the daughter of David Kerr. Now go.”

Something in her bearing made them feel that she was telling the truth. Kelly, timid now and apologetic, was the first to speak.

“Well, we did n’t know you was—why did n’t you say—”

“I guess we ’ll go see Noonan,” was Ryan’s method of beating a retreat.

“He can’t git away, anyway,” Kelly whispered to him.

Gloria breathed a sigh of relief as they turned to go, but in an instant the shrill scream from Ella which brought the men back to the center of the room froze her blood.

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“The boss’s daughter!” It was a witch’s screech ending in a peal of unearthly laughter.

Gloria sank into a chair gasping, “What have I said?”

She felt the curse upon her.

“Come back, Turkey, come back,” shrilled Little Ella, laughing wildly. “The boss’s daughter! The boss’s daughter!”

Her thin hands plucked at the coverlid, and her blazing eyes were fixed upon Gloria, who had shrunk into a weak lump in her chair. Only a few moments had passed since all had admitted that Little Ella dominated the situation. That fact she recognized as readily as did the others. Now she determined to make use of her power. Gloria herself had aroused the savagery of the woman by having inflamed her against the boss, not knowing that the creature’s rage was directed against her own father.

Feverishly stimulated to an unaccustomed mental acuteness by the thoughts of her wrongs as Gloria had laid them bare, all the cruelty of the woman’s nature asserted itself. Re-

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venge with her was sweetness long drawn out. It was the dainty morsel over which the gourmet lingers. It was the tantalizing antics of the cat that gloats over the mouse beneath its paw, and even lets it run a little way to arouse the wild hope that it may yet escape. Having decided upon the ultimate disclosure of Wright's hiding place, Little Ella was now bent most of all on making the daughter of the boss suffer to the limit.

"What's the matter, Ella?" Ryan asked.

"Let them go, I say. Please let them go," Gloria implored.

"You want them to go, do you? Ha! Ha! The boss's daughter! The boss's daughter!"

The last words she uttered in piercing tones horrible to hear as she swayed back and forth, keeping time with her body to the cadence of her cry.

Gloria tried to gather herself together to meet this new attack, but without much success. She felt so weak from the shock that she was only able to rise from her chair with difficulty.

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“You’re out of your head. You’re mad. Keep still, I tell you.” The men still standing irresolute, she turned upon them. “Why are you standing there? Leave this room.”

Little Ella was enjoying herself hugely. Gloria’s every pleading tone was music in her ears. Her eyes burned with excitement. Yet the cruel cat delayed to crush the mouse. Its quivering was too soul-satisfying. Realizing that if she admitted Gloria was the daughter of David Kerr the men would forego their pursuit of Wright, Little Ella knew her best course was to deny the relationship.

“Don’t you go, Turkey,” she yelled. “I’ll tell you the truth.” She turned to Gloria. “I wisht the boss had a daughter, did I?—It’s a lie, Turkey. She’s not Dave Kerr’s girl. He’d laugh to see a daughter o’ his in such a hell-hole. I’d watch her to see that she paid the price,” she glanced at Gloria malevolently, “if—if he had a daughter. An’ yer pertectin’ the man you love!” she mocked. “We’ll see how the boss’s daughter loves.”

Her laughter was terrible. The men could

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not think her the same woman they knew. Gloria started in alarm. She felt the woman was mad, and did not know what she might do.

“What are you going to do?” she asked.

Now Ella was sneering at her. She knew how to choose knife-blades for words. In everything she said was the cunning and the cruelty of a lost woman. Gloria was suffering, she could see, but there was still another chord which would vibrate to misery. Since time began jealousy has been a flaming sword in the hands of an unscrupulous antagonist who knows how to use it. To make Gloria think that she was defending a man untrue to her, was something. To make her believe that she had been defeated by the greater charm of Little Ella herself, was far more.

“Do you think I'd 'a' let you hid that man if he'd loved you? Never. You don't know why he come here, but I do. He come to see me. He loves me.”

She beat her breasts as she spoke to emphasize her words and her eyes sparkled with the challenge she had just hurled at the daughter

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of the boss. Gradually, bit by bit, the veneer of civilization had been chipped away. Gloria no longer saw the gulf that separated them. She knew only that by cozening words this other woman was trying to make her think she had been robbed of her own. Her weakness left her. Now when she summoned all her strength, she joyed to find it did not fail. As Little Ella proclaimed that the man they were hiding had come to see her, Gloria sprang to the side of the bed, and cried with all the indignation of an overwrought soul:

“You lie!”

“That’s what you say, but down in your heart you know it’s the truth. It ain’t the first time he’s been here. Oh, he’s told me about you, the boss’s daughter; but it’s me he loves.”

The men were forgotten in this duel so elemental that it could have had the stone age for its setting. On one side, hate bitter as the grave; on the other, love and faith stronger than death itself.

“Every word you utter is a lie,” Gloria

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blazed. "If you loved him you would n't have called these cutthroats."

"Why don' you tell 'em yer the boss's daughter now?" taunted the other.

"Look here, Ella," Ryan broke in, "we 're tired o' standin' here like fools. Quit yer gassin' an' make good."

"You 'll git yours all right. She's not David Kerr's daughter. Don' you let her bluff you. I know where she hid 'im. I 'll tell you where he is."

Gloria turned upon the men.

"I 've told you the truth, and I 've warned you. Don't you come a step closer." Then she threatened the woman, "If you dare to speak a—"

Little Elia was not to be intimidated.

"When she dragged him in," she began, "she locked the door, an' then she—"

Gloria was standing at no great distance from the bed when Little Ella began her betrayal of Wright's hiding place. As she realized that in an instant the secret would be out, her eyes dilated with her look of hate. Then



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they narrowed to cruel slits, while a tremor ran through her body. One who knew the girl would scarcely have recognized her. Like some lithe creature of the jungle waiting for the kill, she seemed to crouch for the spring. Just as the woman was about to utter the words which would reveal where the newspaper man was concealed, Gloria was upon her. She seemed with one bound to have leapt the space that separated them.

“You Jezebel!” she raged, and struck her fair upon the mouth.

Ryan and Kelly did not stir. The unexpected had happened, and they were held spell-bound.

Gloria’s breath rushed through her teeth with a horrid, hissing sound, her face was flushed, her hair touseled, and her waist in disarray. Yet she heeded nothing but the wild impulse to defend her own.

Little Ella, her scant strength all spent, gasped out that she would tell nothing. Gloria was beside herself and the promise meant nothing to her. With a man’s strength

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she lifted the woman up, held her there an instant, and then hurled her back upon the bed. Her head fell over the side, and she lay as one dead.

Her rage was still hot upon her as she turned to confront the two men.

“As for you, get out.”

Ryan made one last half-hearted stand.

“Say, the boss hates that man. Are you really Dave Kerr’s daughter?”

“And you need to ask such a question!” she stormed. “Ask Mike Noonan if you will, but beware of David Kerr! If ever you have cause to fear him, you have it now. My anger is his anger, and don’t you dare defy the daughter of David Kerr!”

She took a step forward menacingly, as if she had strength to inflict the same chastisement they had seen administered to the woman. They did not stay to argue with her. Leaving Little Ella to her fate, they made a hasty retreat.

No sooner were they out of the room than Gloria put into execution what she had de-



She felt for the beat of his heart



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signed when they departed the first time. Rushing to the door she closed it hastily and pushed the washstand in front of it, wedging it under the knob. This done, she ran back and dragged Wright from his hiding place. There was no thought of the woman whose head hung over the side of the bed in such ghastly fashion.

Gloria lifted his head and dashed water upon his face. She watched him closely, and as she saw that it had no effect upon him, a sudden fear seized her and her cheeks were blanched. With trembling fingers she tore at his shirt and felt for the beat of his heart. She could feel its faint pulsation. He lived.

With a wild cry she flung herself forward in a deep swoon upon the body of the unconscious man.

## CHAPTER XXI

**T**HE one person who could have told how Joe Wright had come to visit Mike Noonan's lodging house was David Kerr. He had sprung the trap himself, never dreaming that his own daughter would be caught in it. When the fight on the Interurban Railway had first started, at command of the boss, Jack Durken, a ward heeler, apparently had gone over to the enemy.

The man had found employment in the circulation department of the *News*, and soon afterward the information reached Wright that one of his own employés was a former henchman of the notorious first ward leader, Mike Noonan. Durken was loud in his denunciations of David Kerr and his followers, and appeared willing to betray whatever he knew of the methods of the gang.

The editor found him a fountain of infor-

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mation regarding the shady politics of Belmont. In reality Durken told only what David Kerr ordered him to tell. Wishing to establish Wright's confidence in the man, Kerr had him disclose many things of slight importance that were absolutely authentic.

One of the charges continuously brought against the machine was that it was colonizing floaters in lodging houses in the low, thickly-populated river wards. Durken even admitted it when Wright asked about it, and several days later suggested a tour of inspection. The blood of the star reporter warmed in the editor's veins. The idea was tantalizing. It was one of those stories a good man would sacrifice half a year's salary to handle.

Without saying any thing to any one, the owner of the *News* thought of the expedition for several days. The more he thought of it, the more it appealed to him. The more it appealed to him the less was the likelihood of his considering the axiom that in a battle it is a general's duty not to get hurt. In fact, the thought of physical injury did not occur to

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him. He was a stranger to Belmont, no one knew him, and in the daytime there was no danger.

When Wright finally decided to investigate personally it was only a few days before the election. He determined that he would wander down into the first ward two days before the votes were cast to gather material for his story. The next afternoon, just on the eve of the election, his final attack on the machine would be an exposé of ring methods of handling vagabond voters imported for the occasion.

This programme was being carried out as originally planned, notwithstanding the break with Gloria the previous day, when Wright was induced to go through Noonan's "hotel." Here, deserted by Durken, who had been his guide, he had fallen into the hands of Turkey Ryan and Buck Kelly.

Although dazed by the unexpectedness of the attack, he had nevertheless managed to give a good account of himself. The cramped attic quarters in which they had fought had



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been in his favor. The two bruisers had been surprised by what a scientific boxer could do in a rough-and-tumble fight. To the momentary indecision resulting from his good defense Wright owed his escape from the room in which he had been trapped.

A stinging blow having taken all the fight out of Kelly, he lurched and fell forward against the door just as the newspaper man had managed to elude his assailants for the instant and slip out of the room. Forced to minister to his companion, Turkey Ryan had lost many valuable seconds before he could take up the pursuit. It was during this respite that Wright, groping blindly for the stair, had tripped and fallen, to be found unconscious by Gloria in front of Little Ella's door.

No one ever knew exactly what had taken place in Noonan's lodging house that afternoon in early spring. Returning from the mission with Dr. Norton, Mrs. Hayes was surprised to find the door of the Windermere woman's room fastened from within. When no response greeted her knock, surprise gave way to alarm,

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and she called upon Dr. Norton to aid her in opening the door. Gloria had not fastened it as securely as she had thought, and it required no great strength on the part of the physician to force it open.

Gloria was removed to Mrs. Hayes's home in a carriage as soon as she was revived. Little Ella, in a semi-conscious, delirious state, was hurried to the city hospital in a police ambulance. An examination having shown that Wright had sustained no serious injury, as soon as he had regained consciousness he was taken to his own apartment.

David Kerr was not allowed to see his daughter. Although the exact nature of the shock to which she had been subjected was not known, since both Kelly and Ryan had disappeared, yet the physicians did not think it best in her nervous condition for her to see even her father. The following day she remained in bed, speaking never a word, busy with her own thoughts. The next day, that of the election, she dressed, but did not leave her room.

When it was seen that Gloria was under the

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cloud of a settled melancholy, there was debate how best to minister to her. Her very silence made the problem more perplexing. She uttered never a word by which they might pluck out the heart of the mystery. Strange as it may seem, she did not even ask about Joe Wright. She did, however, read the morning and the afternoon papers carefully. In neither was there any reference to an attack on the editor. As her mind beat upon the bars of its new iron cage, it sufficed her to know that all must be well with him.

Joe Wright's injuries were not of a serious nature, yet it was thought best that he remain at home for several days. By means of the telephone and through the men who came to the house he edited the *News* the day previous to election. Over the same telephone line came the cheering news the next night that the democrats had been defeated. David Kerr's rule had been broken.

Nothing of a personal nature had been allowed to help contribute to this success. No mention had been made in the *News* of the

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assault on its editor in Mike Noonan's lodging house, because to Wright it had appeared as a personal matter. The day previous Gloria had denounced him and cried aloud for vengeance. He recognized that had Gloria not been mixed up in the affair the result might have been the same, but the personal element was what made him hold his peace.

The news that the day had been carried for good government was only a temporary intoxicant. There were a few moments of exhilaration when his real feelings were submerged in the general rejoicing that David Kerr had been given a more severe set-back than he had ever before received. Then came the ebb of the tide, leaving him on the desolate shore of disheartening uncertainty. The past was a nightmare and the future a blank.

The tumult and the cheers had died away, the brass bands at last were stilled, his sitting-room with two windows on the street and its own private entrance had been cleared of tobacco smoke, and the reception he had held when it was learned the election had gone his

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way was at an end, when Joe Wright sat himself down alone in the quiet of the first hours of the morning to take stock of his future.

Gloria? What of her?

It was always Gloria, Gloria, Gloria, running through his mind, knocking at the door of his heart.

Always of the Gloria who had spurned him, he thought, for he knew nothing of the part she had played in the lodging house. It was not a situation to contemplate with equanimity—this living in the same town with the woman he loved madly. Were Belmont of some size, a city like St. Louis or Pittsburg, there would be the probability that their paths would seldom cross. Yet in Belmont every one knew every one else and never a week passed but what they all met at least in passing.

It would be impossible for him to avoid Gloria altogether. He was frank enough to acknowledge to himself that he would undoubtedly seek those places where there would be some certainty of his meeting her. To be in the same town with her meant that he could not

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give her up. Yet he knew that any overtures he might make would be worse than useless. He felt that her prejudice was such that there could never be established that bond without which matrimony is unholy. The ruffled pool may again be calm, the misted mirror may again be clear, yet he believed in her ignorance she would feel that when two hearts but once have broken troth there is no alchemy that love distills can make the past to live again and the dead present as though it had not been.

The harder he tried to fight against his conviction of what he should do, the more Wright was convinced that there was but one course for him to pursue: it would be best for him to leave Belmont. This would be not for a week or a month, but for all time. It would be necessary for him to dispose of the paper, but this he could do through a broker. He was quite willing to let it go at a sacrifice, to lose what he had himself put into it, so anxious was he to escape from Belmont in search of that magical flower, heart's-ease.

Having made up his mind, Wright went to

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bed, but not to sleep. The few remaining hours of darkness he rolled and tossed. It was not the bruises he had received in the fight at Noonan's that kept him awake, annoying as they were. It was always the one thought—Gloria, Gloria, Gloria.

Morning brought diversions which slightly relieved the tension. There were two editorials to be written upon the political situation. This was followed by conferences with men on the paper, and then came the letter to the newspaper broker announcing that the *News* was for sale. He did not dictate this to his secretary, but wrote it out laboriously in long-hand.

The morning was more than half over when he began to pack. It was Wright's intention to leave Belmont that night, ostensibly on a vacation for the purpose of recuperation after the hard campaign. The owner of the *News* felt, however, that he would never return.

The many steps necessitated in packing taught him how weak he was, and after lunch he called in Patty, the little daughter of his landlady, to help him. They had always been

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the best of friends, and her sorrow when she learned he was going away on a long vacation was genuine. The child was of much assistance, bringing all the smaller things from the living room into the bedroom where the real work of packing was being done.

When the packing was about completed the little girl remembered that she had brought a doll with her. In searching for it in a pile of clothing beside Wright's trunk she felt something hard. To satisfy her curiosity she drew it forth, to discover, instead of her doll, that it was a framed picture of a young woman. It was a picture of Gloria which had appeared in a weekly society paper.

Patty had helped wrap the framed pictures in old newspapers, and as she brought Gloria's picture, she exclaimed triumphantly, "Here's another picture, Mr. Joey."

Wright had put it aside surreptitiously when packing the things he had planned to take with him for immediate use. For the fraction of a minute there had been a debate in his mind as to whether or not he would be weak enough to



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carry her picture with him. He had finally placed it under a pile of clothing beside his steamer trunk.

“It’s extremely good of you to find that picture,” the man remarked with the gravity he sometimes assumed in treating Patty as one of equal years and understanding; “I doubt if I should have found it.”

“I was hunting for my dolly, and looked under a pile of things and found the pretty picture lady.” She gazed at the picture of Gloria admiringly.

“Really, Patty, you astonish me! Your perspicacity is exceeded only by your perseverance. I don’t think I should ever have found that picture. Just leave it on the table there, and don’t—if you love me—lose your dolly any more, please; at least not until all my things are securely packed.”

Patty was just on the point of asking the name of the young woman who had so taken her fancy, when the doorbell rang. With the announcement that no one was at home and she had to answer the bell, she scampered off.

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Wright picked up the picture and gazed at it intently. He was sacrificing all for her. Was the sacrifice worth while? The question would have been an idle one. He loved her, had never loved any one else and never would love any one else. No sacrifice was too great which would mean any increased happiness for her. The sound of some one being brought to his rooms by Patty caused him to put the picture hastily face downward on the table. The door opened to admit Dr. Hayes.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Wright,” he exclaimed cordially as he came forward with hand outstretched. “I hope you ’ll let a democrat drop in to congratulate you on winning the election.”

The editor’s face lit up with pleasure as they clasped hands.

“Thank you, old man. It’s awfully good of you to stop by before I started on a little vacation. The *News* won its fight; but of course we can’t expect this to be the end of the contest, can we?”

The coroner shook his head dolefully.

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“Don’t ask me. I’ve ceased to be a political prophet. ‘Do you think it’ll be a boy, doc?’ they ask. ‘I don’t know,’ says I, shaking my head solemn-like. I’m going to get that wise about politics. I don’t prophesy anything now until after it happens. But I never thought I’d live to see the day that Belmont would go republican. I’m out of politics.”

Wright smiled. “Is n’t that what they all say—the day after?”

“It’s the truth this time. My wife has done nothing but read the riot act to me for the last two days.”

“I imagine Mrs. Hayes is a purist in politics.”

“Well, I can’t blame her,” the doctor admitted. “She’s been poking around down in the river wards, and that surely was a raw frame-up they handed you. She got onto it, and she’s dead sore.”

Wright had discussed the affair with Dr. Norton and had also told Arthur Morrison what little he knew. This was the first intimation coming from the ring that they even knew

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of the occurrence. The newspaper man was curious to know the ring version of it. Dr. Hayes's remark afforded him the opportunity to approach the matter cautiously.

"What was Mrs. Hayes's connection with that—ah—little episode?" he asked. "I gathered from Dr. Norton that in some way or other she knew something about it."

Dr. Hayes stared at him in amazement. Miss Kerr had never uttered a word, yet he readily believed, as did the others, that both Wright and she were the only ones who could tell the story. The woman in whose room they had been found was still in a delirious condition at the city hospital and nothing could be learned from her. Although Kerr had ordered the police to bring in Ryan and Kelly, the search had been unsuccessful.

"What!" gasped Dr. Hayes, "don't you know how you got out of that mess and why the thugs did n't finish you?"

Wright shook his head. His visitor's manner puzzled him.

"I don't know a thing. I think some one

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helped me in some way or other, but Dr. Norton claimed he knew nothing.”

“Well, I ’ll be damned!”

“Don’t; there ’s no occasion for it now—you ’re out of politics. The first thing I knew was when I heard Dr. Norton say, ‘He ’s coming to, all right.’ ”

Soon Hayes picked up his hat to go. He stood for an instant, as if inviting Wright to speak. As he did not do so, the visitor asked, thinking of Gloria the while:

“Is there anything you want to know, now that you ’re going on a vacation, or would you like me to deliver any—messages?”

“No, none.” Then after a pause, “It is better so.”

“Well, I ’m off,” remarked the doctor. He spoke carelessly, to hide his regret, for at heart he keenly sympathized with the man who was making so strong a fight for a principle that love itself had to give way before it. Then he added, apparently as an afterthought, “By the way, I believe that offer for your paper still holds good.”

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Wright laughed, the little world-weary laugh he had sometimes permitted himself since he and Gloria had parted in Judge Gilbert's office.

"My vacation has started," he answered, "and I'm not talking business. But you can tell Judge Gilbert for me that the *Belmont News* is not on the market for his clients."

"All right, I'll tell him," Hayes replied as they shook hands. "Here's good luck to you on your vacation."

Wright smiled grimly, the thought that good luck would perch upon his standard was a sorry hope. He refused to blind himself to the truth with any fleeting consolation such as that.

## CHAPTER XXII

**T**HE morning after the election, Gloria called for the *Banner* as soon as she wakened. The headlines told her at once that her father had been defeated. She searched carefully through the paper for some reference to Joe Wright, but no mention was made of him. Naturally enough, the *Banner* was not in a jubilant mood. It predicted dire things in store for Belmont, but Gloria, remembering what she had learned at so bitter a cost, felt that any change must be for the better.

The girl had now recovered from the first severity of the shock, and was anxious to know for a certainty what had become of Wright. She knew that he lived and was not seriously injured, else there would have been some mention of him in the paper. The day previous

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she had thought much of him, but there had been much else for her to think of. Now with a return to what was to be for her the normal, she wanted to know how he fared.

All the morning Gloria spent in revolving in her mind just what she ought to do. She knew that her father meant Wright harm. Pride and maidenly reserve wrestled with what she considered her duty. Her conscience told her that before she left Belmont forever she should warn this man who once had loved her. He must be placed on his guard against her own father. It cut her like a knife to think that the attack on the editor had really been made at her command. Now she could do no less than tell him how affairs stood.

Dr. Hayes could scarcely conceal his surprise when Gloria followed him into the hall after luncheon and asked about Mr. Wright's condition. He told her that he still kept to his room, but was reported as improving. Before he could frame a question, Gloria thanked him and fled up the stairs. About three o'clock she emerged from her room, dressed for the street,



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and announced to Mrs. Hayes that she was going for a short walk alone.

What the daughter of David Kerr told her hostess was the truth. She did go for a short walk, a walk that took her in the most direct way to the house where Joe Wright resided. The door was opened for her by a little girl who invited her to enter.

"I wish to see Mr. Wright," Gloria explained to the child.

"I'll take you to his sitting-room. He told me to bring anybody in that came to see him, and to tell 'em he'd be back in a minute."

All was silence in the room when the little girl threw wide the door and bade her enter.

"Then he's not in the house, you say?"

"No, he's gone to get a baggageman, but he said to wait," Patty insisted.

"Whom did he wish to wait?"

"Oh, anybody. He said somebody's coming to pack his books. He hurt himself and can't bend over the box."

"Oh!" cried Gloria, with a little gasp of pain. She remembered all too well the hurt

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of which he complained. Then at the same time came a new thought, why was he packing his books? A more critical look showed her many evidences that he was giving up his apartment. She could not understand.

"Is Mr. Wright moving everything?" she ventured.

"Yes, he's going away."

Gloria gazed at the child in surprise, not quite grasping what she said. A smothered exclamation caused her to look up quickly. There, staring at her from the doorway in honest amazement, stood Joe Wright. She felt her cheeks crimson.

"Miss Kerr! You here!" he gasped, before he could master his surprise. Then in an instant he went on in an even, conventional tone, "I beg your pardon, I scarcely expected to find you here."

"No, I—I—I scarcely expected to find myself here, but here I am." As she said this she extended her hands, then dropped them, a gesture which seemed to typify the simplicity with which the visit had been accomplished.

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Wright readily recognized that there was some motive in the call, and dismissed Patty with instructions to let him know if any one asked for him.

“Won’t you sit down?” he begged, remembering his duty as host.

“Thank you, I have n’t a moment to stay.”

Wright looked about for a chair, to find them filled with odds and ends of things intended to be packed. The girl insisted that she preferred to stand, and listened to his apology for the appearance of the room and the explanation that he was moving.

“I learned at luncheon you were going away,” she acknowledged. “Since you would not come to see me, I had to come to see you.”

Again his amazement equaled that the sight of her in his living room had occasioned. He permitted it to betray itself by exclaiming:

“Since I would n’t come to see you! Surely, Miss Kerr, you did n’t expect that? There was nothing whatever equivocal about my dismissal.”

This was something she had not planned, a

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reference to the past. She wished merely to warn him and then take leave of him forever.

“I did n’t come with a desire to refer to that,” she answered. “You must realize that what I have to say seems to me of the utmost importance, else I—oh, you can’t know the effort it has cost me to come here.”

“I ’m sorry if your dislike is so intense.”

She shook her head, with a smile that was only a sad lighting up of her countenance, like the last flare of an expiring flame.

“Let us not speak of like or dislike. All that is past. It is true I promised myself never to see you again, but since that day in Judge Gilbert’s office events have shed such a new light on Belmont and on me that I feel some explanations are due you before you go away.”

Quick as a flash he saw that she had learned the truth, or at least some part of it. With his characteristic generosity he wished to relieve her of the necessity of making explanations. They would lead nowhere and only cause her pain.

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“I appreciate your coming, Miss Kerr, from the bottom of my heart I do, but if—if anything you think you have to tell causes you pain, I’d rather far that what you wish to say should remain unspoken.”

“That’s generous of you, but I should find it harder to maintain silence—because I want to be just.”

“Miss Kerr! There is no occasion for you to—”

“Please, please, don’t interrupt me. It’s hard enough as it is.” A chair he had brought for Gloria she had refused, and now he sank into it himself, his head resting in his hands as he listened. “I have lived away from Belmont,” she went on in an even, repressed monotone that cut him to the heart, “since I was a little girl, too young to understand, and I was brought up to believe that my father was—well, just the opposite of what he is. It was all a mistake, of course. It was no fault of mine, but I must suffer for it just the same. I had everything money could buy; and then you came—and—and I had love.”

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Her voice trembled for the instant. Wright could not stand it.

“Gloria!” he cried, seeking to stop her, but she went on again in the same impersonal manner, apparently unheeding his gesture for her to desist as much as she did the cry of pain that burst from his lips.

“But no one was really kind to me. I lived in a fool’s Paradise. I did not know the truth.” Then vehemently, losing control of herself. “Oh, why did you ever speak to me of love! You, of all men, to make my humiliation doubly great.”

Her manner of speaking showed how much she had suffered since she had learned the truth, how intense her unhappiness would continue to be.

“Don’t speak so, I beg of you,” Wright commanded. “Can you believe that I have not suffered?”

She choose to ignore his question.

“Oh, if I had never come home! If I had even not gone to Judge Gilbert’s office that day! It was fate, Joe, it was fate. I can see

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it all now. We boast that we dominate circumstances, the gods laugh and are our masters still. Looking back the way we've come from that first night I met you here I can see that every step, relentless as death, was leading to that day when I learned the truth about my father."

"And you know?"

"Everything. That's why I'm here. It was really such a little time ago that I came back to Belmont, yet it seems ages. Oh, why did n't you go away! You must have seen how it had to end. Since I came home and first met you, I've lived and suffered and grown old. And I had dreamed such dreams!" Here she paused, as if to fight back the painful memories of those rainbow dreams. Then she admitted them. "And they became rosier and rosier—because of you. Even the disappointments my father's lack of polish caused me were nothing—because of you. Then you ceased to see me, and I did n't understand.

"I wanted you so very much—then—and you did not come. I know now what it was;

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the election was coming on, you had begun to fight my father. You knew I did n't realize his position in Belmont. I'm sincere. I want you to know I understand how hard it was for you, my friend—because—I believe you loved me—sincerely.”

“Sincerely, Gloria.” His reply was almost a sob. “You know I begged you to go away. I would have followed you, and you would never have known.”

His last sentence was full of bitterness, an acknowledgment of the Never-Never Land whither all happiness had flown. A wan smile was her acknowledgment of this.

“That's true, but the gods laugh and are our masters still. I felt that I owed it to my father to remain with him in Belmont. Then came the day in Judge Gilbert's office. Did ever a girl have a courtship crowded into half an hour? So short a time there was between those few words of love and the rude awakening which followed that there remains to me now not even a sweet memory of that avowal which all girls cherish so. And then—well,



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that's why I've come to-day. I could n't let you go away without asking you to forgive me for what I said in Judge Gilbert's office."

"There's no need of speaking of forgiveness. Please do not say any more."

She was not to be deterred from her set purpose, and therefore affected not to hear, going straight on with her narrative.

"You see, I was proud of my father. All my life he'd been an ideal, not a reality, and I thought him incapable of anything base. It turned out I was wrong—what I said about you."

"No, Gloria, you just did n't understand."

"But, just the same, I was wrong, and wanted to tell you so before I went away. I knew I should not be here when you return, and so I came to-day."

"You're not going to leave Belmont!"

"Yes, I am. Do you think I could stay!" Her tone made Wright's heart sink. "No, I lack the courage, Joe, the moral courage. There's that much of the butterfly left in me. I'm not strong and brave like you are."

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Gloria could not know how his strength and bravery were slipping from him little by little as they talked. Her very presence was weaving its subtle spell about him, snaring him with her wan beauty, maddening him with the thought that he was losing her. So she was going away. He wondered why, speculating on how she had come to learn the truth. This led him to ask:

“But your father?”

Had Wright known what a piteous outburst this would evoke, he never would have spoken. Every anguished word she uttered seemed to burn into his soul. He walked up and down nervously as he listened.

“My father! What am I to him? I have n't seen him from that day. Since then I've been with Mrs. Hayes. When I learned at luncheon that you were going away, I had to come because I can't forgive myself for what I said in Judge Gilbert's office that came near ending so—disastrously—for you.”

“Please don't think of it,” he begged. “I

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don't connect you in any manner with the attack on me."

"But I do," she insisted, "because I know the truth." Here was the whole reason for her coming, she told herself. "Since you're in this fight to stay—even though you're fighting my own father—I want you to have all the protection that knowledge of the truth will afford. I've come to warn you."

Wright saw that he had not made her understand that he was giving up the fight.

"But I'm going away."

"Yes, you've told me; but you're coming back again, because you know your place is here. There's work to do."

He recognized instantly that it was her wish for him to remain. Her belief in him, such as it was, centered about his efforts to make Belmont a better place. Not wishing to explain what pain it would constantly give him were he to do so, he avoided the matter by referring to her own future.

"What are you going to do?"

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"I? I'm going abroad in a few days."

"What does your father say to that?"

Gloria's lip curled with scorn at the question. Her answer came with the coldness of a woman of the world, whose warm sympathies had been cruelly crushed and turned into sour distrust. It was the answer of a disillusionized woman who must now fend for herself.

"He can't say anything. What is he to me? I have n't even sent him word yet. He gave me everything in the world, but then at the supremest moment of my life he robbed me of it all. Would a father do that?" she asked fiercely. "What allegiance do I owe to him. The claim of blood! Bah! He's always wished I'd been a boy. He did n't lie to me because he loved me. He did n't even know me. Do you think it wrenches my heart to leave him now? No; a thousand times, no. We've lived too many years apart. What have we in sympathy? We'd be strangers though we lived under the same roof for years."

"But when you go abroad what are you going to do?" He could see no future for her.

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“Just drift. There is so much that I want to forget.”

“Much, Gloria?” he asked gently.

“Yes, much.” She would not let him trap her into a damaging admission.

“Everything?”

“Everything painful.”

Her attitude, he felt it was antagonistic, impatient even of his kindly questioning, stirred him to a vigorous reply. After all, she was but a child, and like a child wanted to shirk the lesson life was teaching her.

“Surely I’ve not been mistaken in you,” he began. “It’s by suffering that we learn to live. You’ve only come to see life as it is, that’s all. Would you throw away the precious knowledge that is power for an Arcadian ignorance akin to weakness? You’ve just said that you’ve come to warn me of something. Were you true to your theory of life, you would leave me in ignorance, because the truth would give me pain. But you don’t believe that.”

From the depth of his world-scarred heart

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he pitied her. She was so young, and so rebellious. He yearned with a great longing to protect her, to shield her from life, but he knew that it could not be. In this world the lesson comes to each one, and by each one must it be learned in all its bitterness. To each it seems that for the faith that is no more there is no compensation. And at the time there is none.

"It's easy enough to talk and give advice," Gloria flung back at him. "What has suffering taught you?"

Here was a question he could answer, and answer decisively.

"It has taught me to be true to my better self." He spoke sternly. Then he regretted that he had seemed harsh with her, for it did not soften her, and she made no comment.

"Please sit down," he said. She accepted the proffered chair stiffly and waited. He had listened to her patiently, and she felt it only fair to hear what he had to say before she left him forever.

Wright came as close to her as he dared. As he spoke, she abandoned the rigid attitude she

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had felt constrained to assume and sank back in the big chair. The man stood behind her, almost leaning on her chair. His voice was low and pleading. She closed her eyes with the pain of it all, as she began to comprehend the full meaning of what he was saying.

“Gloria, I did n’t mean to be harsh just now. God knows I would spare you all you have been through could I have done so. Blot out this terrible week. Can’t we go back to that head-long courtship crowded into half an hour? Let everything be as it was. Then I begged you to go away. Now, since you are going, let us go together. Listen, don’t you remember?

The sun is the flame of the desert,  
And you are the flame of my heart,  
Dreary indeed is the desert unsunned,  
And dreary without you, my heart.

“You know it’s the truth, Gloria. Let us go together.”

He bent over her, trembling with emotion. The girl leaned away from him and put out her hand to keep him from coming still nearer.

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“Don’t make it so hard for me, Joe dear,” she begged. “When you kissed me I thought I knew my heart, but now nothing in the whole world will ever be the same again. You must n’t blame me; I still like you, more than ever, but in a different way. Can’t you understand? You have told me I’m more than a shallow, frivolous girl. I honor you for the offer, Joe, but I would n’t be true to that better self you talk about if I accepted.”

“I make no offer, Gloria,” he pleaded. “I’m begging you to love me, to become my wife.”

She trembled visibly at his words. Yet her resolution was such that she was not shaken from her purpose. She did not dare look at him, however, as she answered:

“I’m afraid the love one must beg for would n’t be worth having, Joe. You would n’t be happy with me. No matter where we went you could n’t forget what happened here. Then consider me—if you’d ever be absent-minded for a minute, gazing





“ I am begging you to become my wife ”



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into space, I'd know you were thinking of Belmont and the opportunities you'd thrown away because of me. I couldn't stand it. I'd always feel that you were recalling the past and regretting the present. It would kill me. No, Joe, I couldn't."

Wright's proposal had been totally unexpected by Gloria. Up to the time he had begun to plead with her to go away with him, she had maintained fair control of herself. His generous offer, as she termed it, had pierced her armor of reserve and laid bare her warm, quivering heart. It was more than she could stand. Her nervous forces had been exhausted, and she began to weep.

"Pride, Gloria, pride," the man whispered. "It's pride that's keeping you from being true to yourself and true to me."

"Don't speak to me, Joe," she sobbed; "I can't stand it."

In his heart he yearned with all the ardor of youth and love to gather her in his arms and comfort her. Yet he knew her well enough to

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know that it could not be. Her humiliation had rendered impregnable the barrier she had erected between them. There was naught he could do but suffer in silence while she wept.

## CHAPTER XXIII

**G**LORIA hated herself for the paroxysm of emotion to which she had given way in the presence of the man whose love she had rejected. There was no interpretation to be put upon it save that her nerves were overwrought, yet she did not know how he would construe her tears. She did not wish him to think her weak. Suddenly the girl remembered that tears were a woman's weapon. The thought so enraged her that in her anger at being so much a mere woman she forgot to weep. She had in her the spirit of her father. Drying her eyes hastily, she turned to say good-by.

Wright saw her turn and hold out her hand. Could she have changed her mind? His heart prompted this thought, but one glance at her face told him she was still determined to go her own way alone.

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“Good-by,” she said.

“Is it to be good-by, Gloria?”

“That, and nothing more.”

The man looked at her in a dazed manner. Now that the time of parting had come she had far more self-possession than he. He groped about in his mind for something to say, but words were inadequate. There is no telling how his feelings might have betrayed him had there not come a knock at the door to interrupt their parting.

At the sound Gloria exclaimed with a start, “Who ’s that?”

Wright walked to the door, saw who asked for entrance, and opened it wide for Patty to enter.

“Mr. Joey, there ’s a man says he must see you at once.”

“Did you tell him I was busy, and to wait?”

“Oh, yes, just like you told me, but he said to tell you he was David Kerr!”

“My father!” Gloria took a step forward. Her exclamation told what a surprise this news was to her.

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"What does this mean?" he asked.

"You know as much as I. I've told you I've not seen my father since that day in Judge Gilbert's office. He's been busy with politics, but, more than that, I've—well, I've preferred staying with Mrs. Hayes."

Patty, tired of listening to a conversation she could not understand, and, remembering the visitor, asked, "What shall I tell him?"

"Wait a minute, Patty." Wright motioned the child to the door. Then he turned to Gloria. "You can leave by this side entrance. No one will be the wiser for this visit. The minute the door closes behind you, Patty—and I—will have forgotten that you called. But I will not have forgotten your kindness and consideration. Before you leave I want you to know that I can't value too highly the motive that prompted your call. To the end I'll treasure it as a memory hallowed by the parting from the only woman I—Good-by."

He felt he could not complete what he wished to say without a show of emotion to which it would not do to give way. The only

## THE DAUGHTER

thing he could do was to hold out his hand and say, "Good-by."

Gloria put both hands behind her back, and shook her head.

"No, I refuse to go."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. I intend to stay here and meet my father and hear what he has to say to you."

Wright gazed at her intently, but she did not quiver under his scrutiny. His effort to read her thoughts, to divine the impulse that had led her to her decision to meet her father in his apartment, met with no success.

"It shall be as you say," he assented. "Go, Patty, tell him to come in." After Patty closed the door there was an awkward silence which he broke by saying, "I must say that this meeting is ill-advised."

She sighed and shook her head.

"Oh, ill-advised or not, my mind is made up. Things cannot go on as they are. If henceforth I am to direct my own affairs, why should n't I begin now?"



## OF DAVID KERR

“But how explain your being here?”

“If he can't believe what I have to say he is n't worth the slight esteem with which I still regard him.”

“Here he comes.”

“Let him see you first.” She retreated to a corner of the room where her father's first glance as he entered would not discover her. Patty opened the door and David Kerr walked into the room.

The two men looked at each other without any attempt at a feigned cordiality.

“Mr. Wright,” began the boss, and at mention of his name the newspaper man bowed slightly in recognition of the greeting, “I met Dr. Hayes this afternoon. He spoke of you, and what he told me has led me to break a custom of years; I've come to see you. In this town it's always been the other way.” He spoke with all his accustomed force, and seemed even more confident than usual as he added, “The old way will continue, sir, but owing to what you might call the relationship that once—”

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"Sir!" thundered Wright in astonishment. Covertly he looked at Gloria, to find his own amazement mirrored on her face.

"Bound us, I thought I 'd come to see you," the boss continued, not heeding Wright's exclamation.

"One minute, sir." Wright was not willing for him to proceed without his knowing that his daughter was in the room with them. "Before you speak further you must know that we 're not alone in this room."

"We 're not?" He looked about him, and at the sound of a familiar voice turned sharply to confront his daughter.

"No, Father; I 'm here." She advanced coolly to the center of the room, and waited for him to speak.

"Gloria! My daughter here!" He managed to gasp. Wright, determined not to have his hand forced, waited to see what card the daughter would play.

"Wait a minute, please," she remarked quietly, the most self-possessed of the three. "Are you so blind you can't see you find me

## OF DAVID KERR

here because I wish it so? My visit to Mr. Wright surprised him just as much as did yours. When you were announced, I told him I would stay."

"So that's it, is it?" her father raged. "Have you turned against me, too? Why did n't I raise you like you ought to 'a' been!" It was with an evident effort that he was restraining himself even as much as he was.

"Would to heaven you had!" Gloria exclaimed in a low tone. "You gave me only the roses of life, and now the thorns—all that life offers me—seem sharper than I can bear."

Wright had thought his heart had been so wrung that nothing could hurt him worse, but this confession of unhappiness to her father made his own unhappiness greater than he had believed it could be.

"Gloria, this is distressingly painful. Please don't," he begged. Then he turned to her father. "Why have you come here?"

"Why is she here?"

"Father," now she spoke timidly, a maiden telling of a dear, dead love, "for a little while

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Mr. Wright. and I—were engaged—to be married. I don't think you know what that means to a girl, what it meant to me. But you do know how it ended. Yet we're still such good friends that I felt I could come this afternoon to—”

As she spoke, a great light began to dawn upon her father. At the words, “good friends” he saw his whole plan successful, although worked out along lines a trifle different than what had been in his mind when he had determined to call upon the editor. Your successful general is a great opportunist, and David Kerr was quick to seize this opportunity.

“Good friends!” he echoed, interrupting her. “Then I'm glad I found you here. Just listen to me a minute. I ain't got much to say, Mr. Wright, but we understand each other pretty well. Now then—you gave us a pretty hard bump, an' I admire you fer it. Of course, you're new to Belmont an' it looks all right from yer p'int o' view.” His tone was now suave and conciliatory. “But you're too good

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a man to be blockin' the wheels o' progress in this town."

"Things were running pretty smooth when I came here, were n't they?" Wright was willing to admit that much.

"Exactly, exactly." Kerr took a step forward and glanced at Gloria before he went on. "Now then, what do you say to this? You ain't no more republican than you're democrat, so switch over an' join me. If it's too strong fer you to go, I'll cut out that Maple Avenue railway line, an' we'll go at it some other way."

Gloria looked at her father in astonishment. Wright did not interrupt him, wishing to hear all that he had to say. "This campaign's taught me I'm growin' old. Some day somebody's got to take my place. There ain't a man in the party with your sense. I need you, an'—what's more—you'll profit by bein' with me."

"Mr. Kerr, it won't take me many words to give you your answer."

Reading disapproval in the remark, David

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Kerr craftily replied with his kindest manner, "Take yer time, take yer time. The more you think it over, the more you 'll like it. Besides, I 'm thinkin' of Gloria. You two talk it over. She 's—"

"Father!" The girl was perfectly horrified and her sense of the fitness of things outraged by having her name dragged into the discussion. "Would you dare connect my name with such an affair!"

To the coarse nature all things are coarse, and her father seemed surprised that she should resent the manner in which he had connected her with the offer. "An' why not?" he asked. "I 've been thinkin' the matter over, an' you an' him would make a pretty good team."

"Oh!" Gloria's disgust was unspeakable. Mere rage was useless to express her feelings. She gave her father one withering look and turned away, walking up and down the room like a caged animal.

Kerr turned to Wright, since Gloria appeared to have no inclination to listen. "So

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I argues, why not fix it up between us." Then he spoke to his daughter in explanation, "Not knowin' you 'd be here. But it 's just as well. Now, Mr. Wright, what I say is this: This town wants somebody to run it. Belmont can't git along without somebody to keep the wheels greased. I 'll put the paper on its feet fer you, an' gradually—as gradually as you like—you kin come over to my way of thinkin'. Then what 'd be more natural than fer you to take over the runnin' o' things—especially as you 'd be my son-in-law."

Wright was about to make reply, but Gloria was too quick for him. Stamping her foot with rage, she paused before her father defiantly.

"Oh, this is more than I can bear! Am I a dog, a horse, a pig, that I can be traded in a dirty deal with not so much as 'by your leave.' I 'll not stand it for another instant. One humiliation after another has been my lot, but this is the last. I 'm through with you. What has passed has taught you nothing; you 're the bargaining, trading, scheming politician still,

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so low that you'd make your own daughter, your own flesh and blood, the bait to lure a good man from his purpose. But you can't do it," she cried, a note of triumph creeping into her denunciation; "he's not your kind. And do you believe that I'd submit to such a thing? What can you think of me? You put me on a plane with those vile creatures who pay you for protection."

"Gloria, please stop!" Wright pleaded. Her father could only look at her in wonder as she poured out the pent-up passion of her inmost soul.

"No, I'll not stop—there's more to say.—Here, within this hour, Mr. Wright asked me again to be his wife, and I refused—refused because of you. I came here to warn him against you, to tell him the truth, because once we loved each other. No one can blame me for wishing him well. I came to tell him because I can't be here after this to save him as once I did. Over my body I dared your hirelings to take him, and not one moved. Now I'm going away forever and I want him to



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have what protection the truth will give. But my warning would be useless; what you offered to do just now is warning enough in itself. The man who would sell his own daughter is capable of anything!"

"Please, Gloria, stop," Wright entreated. "I'm not accustomed to have any one else fight my battles for me. I can take care of myself."

"May be you can," sneered the boss, "but ever since you've been here you've been hidin' behind my daughter. It's because o' her I didn't go after you hot an' heavy long ago. An' then when they did come near gittin' you the other day, she stopped 'em."

"You, Gloria!" Wright could not understand. She only bowed her head.

"But now, by God! that's all past." Kerr brought his fist down on the table with a bang. His breath came in apoplectic gasps and his face was livid with rage. "She's out of it as fer as I'm concerned. I did everything in the world fer her, an' it wasn't no use." He turned to his daughter as he hurled out his an-

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ger and disappointment between his gasps for breath. "I was ready to stan' by you to the end, an' what do I git fer all my schemin' an' plannin' fer you? Nothin' but glum looks an' harsh words. If yer goin' away, go. I disown you. I cast you off."

The girl did not quail beneath his bitter words. They only inflamed her to announce the decision she had already made. Her lip curled with scorn, her eyes snapped, as she looked at her father.

"You disown me! You cast me off!" All the contempt she could muster she threw into her voice. "What right have you, who would barter me away as you would a horse or dog? No, it's I disown you!"

Wright walked over to her and sought to take her hand gently in his, but she drew away. She would stand alone. Like a blind old bear David Kerr seemed to grope his way to the door. There he turned to gaze once more upon the wreck of his latest schemes. His rage was still hot upon him.

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“I found you in this—this—adventurer’s room. I leave you here. Look to yerself, you are no child o’ mine.”

The door banged behind him and Gloria Kerr knew that they had met for the last time. The girl, feeling so miserably alone in the world, turned to find bent upon her the tender gaze of the man whom she had once sworn to follow to the end of the world. For them love was dead, she knew, and now life would be for her only a succession of weary days.

“I thought all but my body died that day we spoke of love to find it but a dream,” she acknowledged sadly, “yet there was one cup still more bitter I had to drain—and this was that cup’s dregs.”

“Oh, Gloria, believe me, out of unhappiness happiness comes. Your place is with me now. I had n’t told you, but I, too, am going away forever. And what is more, I ’m going to take you with me.”

She looked at him in wonder, then slowly shook her head.

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“No, you can’t leave Belmont, Joe. You’re not a coward. I’m going, but your place is here.”

“Do you think I shall let you go alone? Never. The one reason I am going East is to sell the *Belmont News*. I’m through with it. Then I shall follow you over the world until I make you mine—because I love you.”

The girl looked at him with the faintest of smiles battling with her settled melancholy. He was bordering on melodrama, and she was regarding him with the same gentleness a loving mother exhibits toward an unreasoning little child.

“How selfish you are, Joe. All your fine sermons are going for naught. You’ve preached of your duty, and yet at the chance to show your devotion to that duty you’re wanting to give up the fight. I’m not worth it, Joe, really I’m not. Think of Belmont. A general does n’t desert his soldiers after a victory, just because he knows the enemy has sent for reinforcements. That would be cowardly, and it is n’t like you, Joe. The brave

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general does n't give ground, he advances. Don't follow me; I would hate you. I know how Belmont needs you."

"But I need you, Gloria. And what is more, you need me and I can't let you go alone. There is a world elsewhere, even other Belmonts where we can live and labor and love. I did n't know till your father referred to it that you were at Noonan's that day. Can't you see how I need you for my guardian angel? How did you happen to be there?"

Briefly she detailed the visit, minimizing her part in saving him. None the less he was able to see that it was to her he owed perhaps life itself. He listened in silence, letting her tell her story in her own way. After she had ceased to speak he still was silent, going over in his mind the motives which might have prompted her in coming now to see him, to warn him, as she had said. His heart led him to but one conclusion, a conclusion he reached gladly. He believed she still loved him. She was a woman, therefore to be won. There was just one way to win her, he felt.

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“Gloria, I’ve come to a decision.” She looked at him questioningly. “I’m going to do what you’ve ordered. I’m going to stay here and fight for Belmont.”

“Joe, you mean it!” Her face lit up with pleasure and she held out both her hands to him. He took them both, and to her surprise, and despite her resistance, drew her to him.

“But I’m not going to stay alone. If I’m to fight the good fight, I’m not going to fight alone. You called me a coward for wanting to go; won’t you reward me for deciding to stay? And out of unhappiness happiness will come. You must stay, Gloria; our place is here.”

“Our place!” she echoed, and then was silent for a little time, her head upon his shoulder. He held her tightly, she could not escape. The feeble efforts she had made to break from him were now abandoned as she thought more and more upon his words. At last she looked up at him and smiled. “Yes, Joe, our place is here, and our happiness. Right in this room all my old pride died. But there has been

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born a new pride, a pride in you and in me, and in what it has been given us to do." The tears came into her eyes as she thought of what they were to each other. "You are all I have in the world, dear; you are my world. Make me always proud that I am your wife."

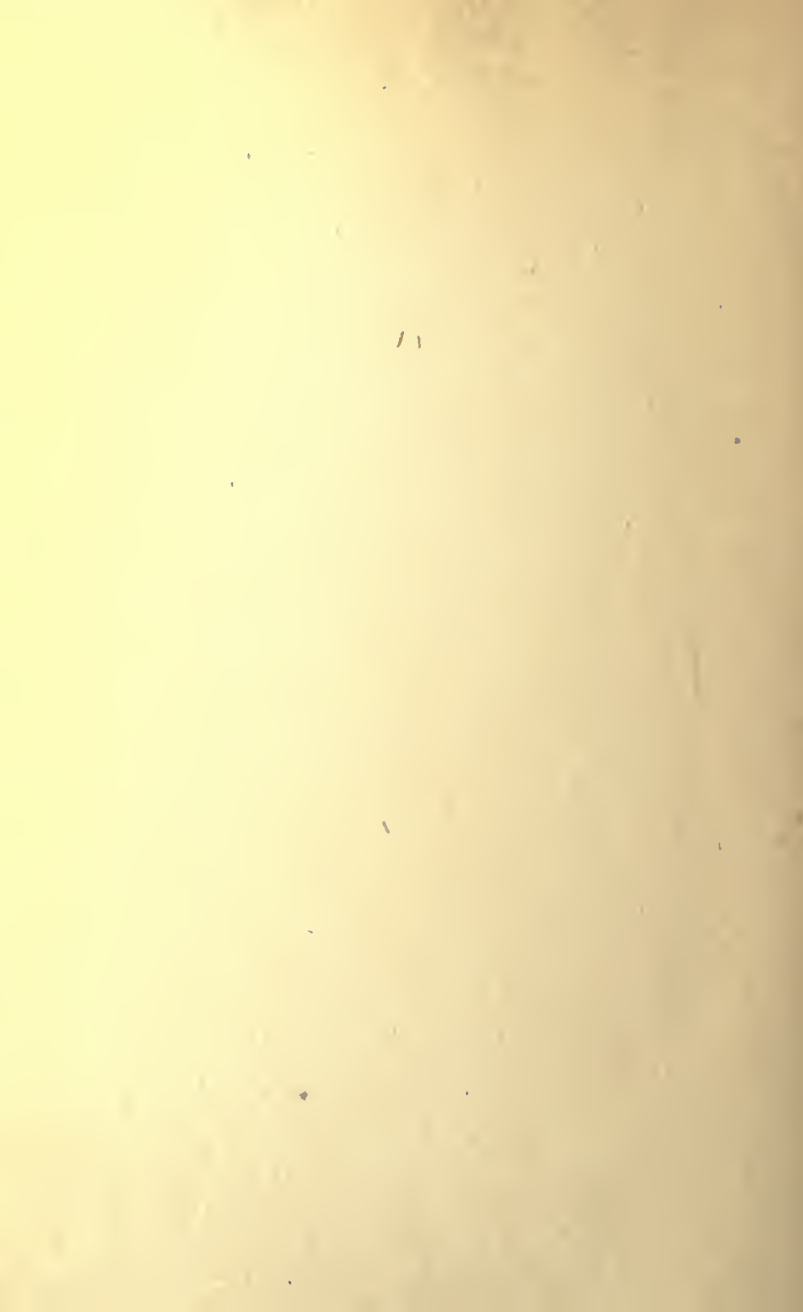
Wright drew her closer to his heart and kissed her. And there in the shelter of his arms she rested. Peace had come to her.

THE END.























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